I...VAMPIRE!

JOE KUBERT

DC™

I...a VAMPIRE!

L...Vampire!

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #290
COVER DATE: MARCH 1981 COVER ARTIST: JOE KUBERT
WRITER: J.M. DEMATTEIS ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #291
COVER DATE: APRIL 1981 COVER ARTIST: JOE KUBERT
"NIGHT OF THE LIVING UNDEAD"
WRITER: J.M. DEMATTEIS ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #293
COVER DATE: JUNE 1981
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"THE BURNING"
WRITER: J.M. DEMATTEIS ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #295
COVER DATE: AUGUST 1981
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"MOTHER LOVE/MOTHER HATE"
WRITER: J.M. DEMATTEIS ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #297
COVER DATE: OCTOBER 1981 COVER ARTIST: JOE KUBERT
"ZEN FLESH! ZEN BONES"
WRITER: J.M. DEMATTEIS ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #299
COVER DATE: DECEMBER 1981 COVER ARTIST: JOE KUBERT
"THE SUN ALSO BURNS"
WRITER: BRUCE JONES ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #302
COVER DATE: MARCH 1982
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"BLOOD TIES"
WRITER: BRUCE JONES ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #303
COVER DATE APRIL 1982
"CARNIVAL OF SOULS"
COVER ARTIST JOE KUBERT
WRITER: BRUCE JONES ARTIST: TOM SUTTON
84

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #304
COVER DATE: MAY 1982
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"THE NIGHT HAS EYES"
WRITER: BRUCE JONES ARTIST: ERNIE COLON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #305
COVER DATE: JUNE 1982
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"BLOOD AND SAND"
WRITER: BRUCE JONES ARTIST: ERNIE COLON
110

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #306
COVER DATE: JULY 1982 COVER ARTIST: JOE KUBERT
"A RIP IN TIME"
WRITER: BRUCE JONES ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
123

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #307
COVER DATE: AUGUST 1982 COVER ARTIST: JOE KUBERT
"LOVERS LIVING, LOVERS DEAD"
WRITER: BRUCE JONES ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #308
COVER DATE: SEPTEMBER 1982 COVER ARTIST: JOE KUBERT
"MIRRORS THAT LOOK BACK"
WRITER: BRUCE JONES ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #309
COVER DATE: OCTOBER 1982
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"WITCH HUNT"
WRITER: BRUCE JONES ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #310
COVER DATE: NOVEMBER 1982
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"MANHATTAN INTERLUDE"
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
PENCILLER: ADRIAN GONZALES INKER: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #311
COVER DATE: DECEMBER 1982
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"BY THE TIME WE GOT TO WOODSTOCK..."
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
PENCILLER: PARIS CULLINS PENCILLER: ADRIAN GONZALES
INKER: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #312
COVER DATE: JANUARY 1983
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"THE THING IN THE TUNNELS"
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
PENCILLER: ADRIAN GONZALES INKER: THOMAS SUTTON
199

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #313
COVER DATE: FEBRUARY 1983
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"SIDE EFFECTS"
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
PENCILLER: ADRIAN GONZALES INKER: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #314
COVER DATE: MARCH 1983
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #315
COVER DATE: APRIL 1983
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
PENCILLER: PARIS CULLINS INKER: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #316
COVER DATE: MAY 1983
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"BACK IN THE U.S.S.R."
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
PENCILLER: PARIS CULLINS INKER: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #317
COVER DATE: JUNE 1983
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
"BLOOD IS THICKER..."
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
PENCILLER: PARIS CULLINS INKER: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #318
COVER DATE: JULY 1983
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL WM. KALUTA
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
PENCILLER: DAN DAY INKER: THOMAS SUTTON
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HOUSE OF MYSTERY #319
COVER DATE: AUGUST 1983
COVER ARTIST: MICHAEL KALUTA
"DREAMS OF DEATH"
WRITER: DAN MISHKIN WRITER: GARY COHN
ARTIST: THOMAS SUTTON
278

BRAVE AND THE BOLD #195
COVER DATE: FEBRUARY 1983 COVER ARTIST: JIM APARO
"NIGHT OF BLOOD"
WRITER: MIKE W. BARR ARTIST: JIM APARO
297

COLLECTION COVER BY JOE KUBERT

I, VAMPIRE CREATED BY J.M. DEMATTEIS & TOM SUTTON

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DO YOU DARE ENTER...

THE HOUSE OF

MYSTERY

50¢
ALL NEW!
NO. 290
MAR.

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

BEGINNING: AN UNFORGETTABLE NEW SERIES... "I...VAMPIRE!"

JOE KUBERT

BEGINNING: A SENSATIONAL NEW SERIES IN THE FEAR-SHROUDED HOUSE OF MYSTERY TRADITION!

"MY MIND IS ASWIRL WITH SO MANY IMAGES -- FRIENDS, LOVERS, DEMONS -- ALL ROLLING INTO ONE INDECIPHERABLE WHOLE...

"AS THE YEARS PASS, IT BECOMES INCREASINGLY HARDER TO TELL WHERE THE DARK LINE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL -- BETWEEN THE SHIMMERING GATES OF HEAVEN AND THE STEAMING PITS OF HELL -- TRULY LIES. AND NOWHERE IS THIS CONFUSION MORE EVIDENT THAN WITHIN MY OWN HEART.

"I HAVE SEEN SO MUCH -- I HAVE BORNE THE DEVIL'S FLAMING CROSS -- YET STILL I SURVIVE..."

J-6489

I...VAMPIRE!

J.M. DeMATTEIS
Writer/creator

TOM SUTTON
artist

JOHN COSTANZA
letterer

ADRIENNE ROY
colorist

LEN WEIN
editing & Guidance

"MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD, IS IN THE HOTEL LE GRANDE,' THE EERIE VOICE ON THE PHONE HAD WHISPERED -- AND THESE TWO HAD BEEN THE FIRST TO ARRIVE IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL...

WELL, DEBORAH -- WHAT DO YOU SEE?

LOOKS LIKE HER -- BUT WHO KNOWS? WE'VE BEEN FOOLED BEFORE...

HOTEL LE GRANDE

LET ME LOOK, GIRL. MY EYES MAY BE OLD -- BUT THEY'RE SHARP.

DON'T GRAB, MISHKIN!

"DEBORAH DANCER AND DIMITRI MISHKIN WERE SO LOST IN THEIR TASK THAT THEY FAILED TO NOTICE THE WILD-EYED WOLF THAT LEAPT SILENTLY ONTO THE ROOF WITH FURTIVE GRACE...

"BUT THE FERAL BEAST SOON MADE ITS PRESENCE KNOWN WITH A GUTTURAL...

GRROOOWWRRRRRRRRR

ASSUME A DEFENSIVE POSTURE, DEBORAH!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, OLD MAN. WORRY ABOUT YOURSEL--

HEY, WAIT! LOOK AT THAT THING -- IT'S...

"...CHANGING! WITHIN A PRETERNATURALLY THICK VEIL OF FOG THE BEAST WAS BEING TRANSFORMED...

"...AND FROM THE CENTER OF THE MISTY CLOAK...

"...I EMERGED!"

GOOD EVENING, DEBORAH... MISHKIN...

OH, ANDREW -- IT'S YOU!

I THOUGHT IT WAS ONE OF THEM!

I DIDN'T MEAN TO *STARTLE* YOU--BUT THE WOLF-FORM IS *PERFECT* FOR ROOFTOP TRAVEL.

OH, I DON'T MIND, ANDREW...

ACH! YOU BOTH ACCEPT THESE *PERVERSIONS* SO CASUALLY!

BELIEVE ME, MISHKIN-- I DO NOT ACCEPT MY...*CONDITION*...

...CASUALLY...

"MISHKIN AND I HAD BEEN ASSOCIATES FOR YEARS-- BUT STILL HE *FEARED* ME-- *LOATHED* MY UNDEAD WAYS. AND I COULD NOT *BLAME* HIM...

"...FOR HE HAD NOT KNOWN ME *BEFORE*. HE HAD NOT KNOWN THE CHEERFUL LORD ANDREW BENNETT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH'S COURT...

"...HE'D NEVER HEARD ME *LAUGH*--OR RAISE MY VOICE IN JOYOUS *SONG*...

"I WAS A FAR *DIFFERENT* MAN THEN. I'D BECOME SOMETHING OF A *LEGEND* AT COURT THANKS TO MY DARING EXPLOITS DURING THE WAR WITH SPAIN...

"...BUT I MUCH PREFERRED BEING LIONIZED FOR MY BALLADS OF *PEACE*...

"...FOR I SAW NO GLORY IN WAR. I SAW ONLY THE CORPSES OF INNOCENTS -- SENT TO THEIR DEATHS FOR REASONS THEY COULD NEVER TRULY COMPREHEND...

"...AND IT MADE ME *SICK*. NO DOUBT THAT WOULD *SURPRISE* MISHKIN...

"AND HOW WOULD THE OLD RUSSIAN REACT TO THE SIGHT OF ANDREW BENNETT IN LOVE?

"AS IF THE WORD 'LOVE' COULD DO *JUSTICE* TO THE INEFFABLE FEELING THAT UNITED ME WITH MY DARLING... *MARY*..."

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"MARY SEWARD WAS THE QUEEN'S PERSONAL HANDMAIDEN. SHE WAS ALSO THE WOMAN I TREASURED ABOVE ALL WHO LIVED. SHE WAS MY LIGHT-- MY LIFE...

"MARY UNDERSTOOD ME--ACCEPTED ME UNCONDITIONALLY--MADE EVERY INSTANT NEW AND PRECIOUS...

"SHE HAD AN INTUITION--A WAY OF SEEING INTO THE HEART OF THINGS--THAT OFTEN BORDERED ON THE PSYCHIC. AND LIKE A FOOL I MADE JOKES OF HER GIFTS...

ANDREW-- PLEASE DON'T GO RIDING TONIGHT. SOMETHING FEELS WRONG.

ANOTHER VISION, BELOVED...?

YOU'D DO WELL TO KEEP THESE THINGS QUIET-- OR THE QUEEN WILL BURN YOU AS A WITCH! HA-HA-HA!

TILL LATER, BELOVED!

TILL... LATER, ANDREW...

"SO OFF I WENT--AS I DID EVERY EVENING. I ENJOYED THE SOLITUDE-- THE SILENCE...

"...AND THE DARK...

LORD BENNETT... IS THAT YOU...?

"THE OLD MAN APPEARED FROM NOWHERE: A GHOST RIDING A WAVE OF MOONLIGHT...

DO I KNOW YOU, GOOD SIR? IT IS HARD TO PIERCE THIS GLOOM...

EVEN AT THE SUN'S HEIGHT YOU WOULD NOT KNOW ME, LORD. YOUR SOUL IS TOO PURE AND THUS YOUR EYES WILL NOT SEE.

"HIS VOICE WAS ENCHANTING-- HIS TONES SOMBER YET MELLIFLUOUS...

"I FELT SOMEHOW DRAWN TO HIM--LIKE A CHILD TO ITS MOTHER'S BREAST..."

SEE...? SEE WHAT...?

SEE THAT YOUR VISION OF A JUST UNIVERSE IS A LIE...

...THAT THE GOODNESS YOU EMBRACE IS A SHAM!

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"HIS CRIMSON EYES WERE ENTICING--MESMERIZING--MY WILL DRAINED LIKE BLOOD FROM A WOUND...

BOW DOWN TO ME, LORD--AND PEER INTO THE BLACK HUB OF THE UNIVERSE...

...LOOK BEYOND MAN'S LIMITED PERCEPTION AND SEE THE CORE OF EVIL --OF DESPICABLE DEBAUCHERY!

"HIS AGED, CRACKED LIPS PARTED...

I WILL TEACH YOU THE TRUTH I ALONE HAVE LIVED WITH--FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS...

"...AND I KNEW WHAT HE WAS...

"...BUT--GOD FORGIVE ME--I WAS HELPLESS TO RESIST. THE BLOOD POURED FROM ME IN A SEEMINGLY-ENDLESS FLOW--UNTIL...

ANDREW... MY LOVE...

MARY...?

"WAS IT HALLUCINATION--SUBCONSCIOUS PROJECTION--PSYCHIC LINK...? I CANNOT SAY...

"...BUT THE SIGHT OF THAT FACE--AND ALL IT MEANT TO ME--FLOODED ME WITH STRENGTH--WITH A VITAL CLARITY... AND I ACTED!

AWAY FROM ME, DAMN YOU!

UGHH!!

LIFE IS NOT THE HORROR YOU PERPETRATE!

THERE IS DIGNITY IN THE WORLD--THERE IS MEANING IN THIS LIFE...

...AND SUCH AS YOU CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO CORRUPT THESE FRAGILE TRUTHS!

"I REMEMBERED THE LEGENDS THAT HAUNTED ME AS A CHILD--LEGENDS OF THE CREATURE THAT THE IRISH CALLED DEARG-DUL...

"...I KNEW WHAT HAD TO BE DONE TO DESTROY THIS INHUMAN FILTH...

"...AND I DID IT!

"BUT MY TRIUMPH HAD COME TOO LATE--I'D LOST MORE BLOOD THAN I'D REALIZED...

M-MARY...

"MY VISION BLURRED--MY INSIDES TURNED TO SLIVERS OF ICE...

"...AND--IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, 1591--I DIED..."

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"FOR THREE DAYS AND NIGHTS UNHOLY SLEEP TOOK ME-- AND WHEN I FINALLY RETURNED TO MY OPULENT QUARTERS WITHIN THE CASTLE...

WHY IS ANDREW AVOIDING ME--WHY DOESN'T HE LEAVE HIS ROOMS?

HE MUST KNOW HOW WORRIED I AM. THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG HERE--SOMETHING TERRIBLY WRONG. I JUST...

...KNOW IT...?

M-MARY!

OH SWEET LORD-- THE DREAMS I'VE BEEN HAVING-- THE DREAMS OF THE OLD MAN WITH SATAN'S EYES...

...THEY WERE TRUE!

"TREMBLING, I DROPPED THE CHALICE OF DEER'S BLOOD AND--IN WRACKED SOBS OF TORMENT-- TOLD MARY MY TALE...

"...AND WHEN I'D FINISHED...

A-ANDREW--I LOVE YOU MORE THAN LIFE ITSELF.

I MUST BE BY YOUR SIDE... FOR ALL ETERNITY... MAKE ME... WHAT YOU ARE, MY LOVE.

N-NO...

"BUT THE SURGING BLOOD-LUST AND THE ACHING LONELINESS IN MY DAMNED SOUL SAID... YES...

"THREE NIGHTS OF AGONIZED WAITING LATER, SOMETHING AROSE-- BUT IT WAS NOT MY MARY..."

OH, ANDREW--I NEVER DREAMED THAT IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS. I FEEL SO STRANGE-- SO WONDERFUL!

THERE IS POWER IN ME--ALL THE UNBRIDLED POWER OF HELL AT MY COMMAND!

WE ARE SUPERIOR TO THE HUMAN RABBLE NOW, ANDREW! WE CAN HAVE THIS KINGDOM IN OUR HANDS-- NO ONE CAN STOP US!

WE SHALL BE RULERS ON A THRONE OF BLOOD!

WH-WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, MARY?!

YOUR WORDS ARE TWISTED AND UNCLEAN... LIKE HIS! I HAVE MADE YOU A THING LIKE HIM!

YOU DARE REJECT ME AFTER I GAVE UP MY LIFE FOR YOU?!

YOU SHALL PAY FOR THIS INDIGNITY, ANDREW BENNETT --BY THE DEVIL, YOU'LL PAY!

MARY... NO! YOU MUST...

...UNDERSTAND...

"THAT NIGHT I VOWED THAT I WOULD FIND HER AGAIN--THAT I WOULD SAVE THE SOUL THAT I HAD DESPOILED...

"EVEN IF IT TOOK FOREVER!

"I STALKED HER ACROSS THE CONTINENTS AND ACROSS THE CENTURIES--AND LONG WAS THE TRAIL OF GORE SHE LEFT BEHIND.

"WE BOTH TOOK MANY NAMES--WE BOTH TOOK MANY LIVES--AND SOME DAY I WILL SPEAK OF THOSE GRIM ENCOUNTERS...

"...BUT NOT NOW, FOR...

...TIME'S GROWING SHORT, ANDREW. WE'VE GOT TO MOVE IF WE'RE GOING TO CATCH HER!

TIME SEEMS TO HAVE RUN OUT, DEBORAH...

...FOR SHE HAS SENT HER MINIONS TO CATCH US!

AND WHAT THE MISTRESS WANTS, FEEBLE-MIND--THE MISTRESS GETS.

YOU THINK MY AGE HAS ROBBED ME OF MY REASON, VERMIN?

THEN IT IS YOU WHO HAVE THE FEEBLE MIND!

"MISHKIN ACTED IMPETUOUSLY, AS USUAL. BUT, AFTER ALL, HE WAS A YOUNG MAN OF SEVENTY-TWO AND I COULD FORGIVE SUCH IMPULSES IN ONE WHO HAD NOT LIVED ONE-FOURTH MY LIFETIME...

"THE ROOFTOP EXPLODED IN VIOLENCE THEN, AND I MARVELED AT HOW MY MARY'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE HAD GROWN OVER THE FOUR HUNDRED YEARS I'D BEEN PURSUING HER.

"WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GENTLE HAND-MAIDEN WOULD ONE DAY COMMAND SUCH A FORCE OF UNGODLY KILLERS...

"... AND THAT THOSE KILLERS WOULD ONLY BE ONE SMALL PART OF AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION WITH ARMS, EYES, AND EARS IN ALL STRATA OF SOCIETY...

"... WITH OPERATIVES IN CORPORATE TOWERS, CRIMINAL LAIRS, HOUSES OF WORSHIP, AND HOUSES OF GOVERNMENT?

"ANY WONDER THEN WHY I WENT BERSERK AT THE VERY SIGHT OF HER PUPPETS?

"ANY WONDER WHY ALL REASON WAS LOST IN A HAZE OF PRIMORDIAL SAVAGERY?

YOU CAN BREAK MY NECK, ANDREW BENNETT-- BUT YOU CANNOT KILL ME...

JUST AS YOU CANNOT DESTROY THE BLOOD RED MOON!

"THE BLOOD RED MOON! IT WAS AN APT NAME FOR MARY'S OBSCENE AGENCY...

"... AN AGENCY I HAD SWORN TO SMASH--TO DRIVE BACK INTO THE REEKING DIRT FROM WHICH IT CRAWLED...

YOU ARE POWERLESS AGAINST US, BENNETT-- FOR WHAT HARMS US-- HARMS YOU!

"TRUE. BUT I WAS NOT ALONE...

"... THERE WERE OTHERS WHO COULD WIELD THE POWER... AND USE IT!

AWAY, UPUIR*! LET THE HOLY WAFER'S LIGHT DRIVE BACK YOUR CONSUMING DARKNESS!

YOU TELL 'IM, MISHKIN! AND IT GOES DOUBLE FOR ME!

*UPUIR IS THE RUSSIAN NAME FOR THE UNDEAD.-- LEN.

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"HER PAWNS FLED LIKE THE COWARDLY BEASTS THEY WERE -- WHILE I WAS PAINFULLY REMINDED OF JUST WHO AND WHAT I WAS...

G-GET THOSE THINGS... AWAY.. Y-YOU'RE MAKING ME... ILL...

OH, ANDREW -- I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO--

PFAW! HE'LL BE FINE, GIRL -- HIS KIND DOESN'T DIE EASILY... AS YOU WELL KNOW!

"DEBORAH DANCER LOVED ME -- IT WAS TRAGICALLY OBVIOUS -- BUT THAT LOVE COULD NEVER BE RETURNED. MY HEART WAS ENSLAVED TO ONLY ONE WOMAN...

MARY!!

THOSE UPUIR WERE TRYING TO DISTRACT US WHILE SHE ESCAPED!

ESCAPE? NOT NOW -- WHEN WE'RE...

...SO CLOSE!

ANDREW... WAIT!

NO, DEBORAH -- YOU MUST LET HIM GO TO HER...

"FRANTICALLY I FLEW -- BEATING LEATHERN WINGS AGAINST THE CHILL NIGHT WIND...

"...THE MOMENT -- AT LAST -- SEEMED AT HAND...

"... I WOULD HAVE HER...

"... AND NO ONE -- NOT GOD -- NOT LUCIFIER -- WOULD STAND IN MY WAY!

"TREMBLING, I REACHED INTO THAT BLACK MACHINE--LITTLE CARING THAT THE CHAUFFEUR WAS GETTING AWAY...

"...ALL I CARED ABOUT WAS...HER!

"NOT THAT I KNEW WHAT I'D DO WITH HER NOW THAT I HAD HER.

YOU LOOK SLIGHTLY DUMBFOUNDED, BELOVED. WHERE IS THE ELOQUENT SPEECH I ONCE ADORED...

...WHERE ARE THE FLOWERY PHRASES AND THE WORDS OF GENTLE GRACE?

"SOMETHING WAS AMISS. THIS WAS MARY'S FACE...BUT THE VOICE WAS DEEPER--THE ARMS TOO THIN...

"...I'D BEEN DUPED..

HOW EASY TO MAKE A FOOL OF YOU, ANDREW BENNETT! THE MISTRESS SAID IT WOULD BE SO!

IT WAS ONE OF OUR OWN THAT CALLED YOU HERE--JUST SO WE COULD HUMILIATE YOU--TEAR DOWN YOUR WALLS OF EGO!

AS YOU STAND THERE GAWKING--YOUR BELOVED MARY IS SETTING INTO MOTION A PLAN THAT WILL SPELL THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE BLOOD RED MOON! HAHAHAHA!!

"I LET HER GO--WHAT USE TO DALLY WITH PAWNS WHILE THE CHESS-MASTER RAN FREE?

LOOK AT HIM, MISHKIN--HE NEEDS SOMEONE TO COMFORT HIM...

LEAVE HIM ALONE, GIRL--THERE IS NOTHING EITHER OF US COULD SAY TO EASE HIS TORMENT...

"I OVERHEARD MISHKIN'S TROUBLED WHISPERS--AND KNEW HE WAS RIGHT...

THERE MUST BE AN END TO THIS MADNESS, MARY...

...THERE MUST BE AN END!

"BUT LITTLE DID I KNOW THAT THE STRUGGLE THAT HAD LASTED FOUR HUNDRED YEARS--WAS ONLY BEGINNING...

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TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH!

DO YOU DARE ENTER...

NO. 291 APR. 50¢ ALL NEW!

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

GOOD MORNING, BENNETT--AND GOOD-BYE!

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

A NEW "I...VAMPIRE!" SHOCKER!

"the DAWN OF THE LIVING UNDEAD!"

JOE KUBERT

"THE ISLAND OF MANHATTAN IS DOTTED WITH EXCLUSIVE CLUBS -- BARS AND BISTROS NESTLED IN NONDESCRIPT BUILDINGS -- HIDDEN AWAY ON SIDE-STREETS AS SILENT AS TOMBS...

"SUCH A CLUB WAS THE GATES OF HELL. EVERY NIGHT, MEN AND WOMEN OF QUESTIONABLE TASTE AND STYLE WERE WASHED -- LIKE PERFUMED LEMMINGS -- THROUGH ITS HEAVILY-GUARDED DOORS...

"THERE THE SELF-PROCLAIMED ELITE COULD RELAX -- KNOWING WELL THAT THEY WERE SAFE FROM THE CAPERING MASSES ON THE OUTSIDE...

"THERE THEY COULD BE COMFORTABLE AMONGST THEIR OWN KIND...

"IN THE CASE OF THE GATES OF HELL, 'THEIR OWN KIND' MEANT THE LEGIONS OF THE DAMNED -- THE MOST VILE, UNREGENERATE FILTH ON THE FACE OF THE PLANET: THE UNDEAD...

"AND -- TO MY ETERNAL SHAME -- I SAT THERE UNNOTICED BESIDE THEM, FOR I WAS CURSED TO BE ONE OF THEM -- YET FOREVER APART. I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...Vampire!

Chapter two : NIGHT OF THE LIVING UNDEAD!

J.M. DeMATTEIS writer/creator . TOM SUTTON artist . JOHN COSTANZA letterer . ADRIENNE ROY colorist . LEN WEIN editor

"HOURS PASSED. MY STOMACH CHURNED WITH DISGUST. AND THEN, A DRUNKEN VOICE SEPARATED FROM THE OVERWHELMING DIN..."

VELDT IS PICKING UP A GIGANTIC DRUG SHIPMENT AT PIER SEVEN TONIGHT.

I KNOW. "THE MOON" NEEDS ALL THE CAPITAL IT CAN GET FOR PROJECT INTERIOR...

"PERHAPS IT WAS IDLE GOSSIP-- BUT PERHAPS IT WAS THE REVELATION I'D BEEN LISTENING FOR ALL EVENING...

"IN A STATE OF EXCITE-MENT, I RACED FROM THAT DEN OF PROFLIGATES...

"... AND BREATHED PURE AIR AGAIN..."

ANDREW... OVER HERE!

"MY ASSOCIATES, DEBORAH DANCER AND DMITRI MISHKIN, WERE WAITING FOR ME...

DID YOU FIND OUT ANYTHING, ANDREW?

ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT WE MUST PURSUE A "BLOOD RED MOON" OPERATIVE NAMED EMIL VELDT.

WILL THIS VELDT LEAD US TO YOUR BELOVED MARY?

"I WINCED. MARY HAD ONCE BEEN MY BELOVED-- BUT NOW SHE WAS A SOUL-LESS THING WHOSE VAMPIRIC CULT SOUGHT NOTHING LESS THAN COMPLETE DOMINION OVER THE LIVING...

"AND IT HAD BEEN MY UNDEAD KISS THAT HAD TRANSFORMED HER-- LONG CENTURIES AGO.. ALL HER EVIL ON MY HEAD...*

*SEE LAST ISSUE.-- LEN.

YOU DIDN'T ANSWER MY QUESTION!

JUST SHUT UP AND DRIVE, MISHKIN...

"I'D CROSSED EMIL VELDT'S PATH BEFORE. HE WAS A GUTLESS SYCOPHANT--HIS SMALL-TIME DRUG OPERATION NEGLIGIBLE--AND I'D PAID HIM LITTLE ATTENTION IN MY WAR AGAINST THE 'MOON.'

"BUT THAT WAS A SITUATION...

"...I SOON SAW...

"...RECTIFIED..."

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT VELDT USES THESE ADDICTED WRETCHES TO TRANSPORT HIS MERCHANDISE!

WHY NOT, OLD MAN? IT'S CHEAP LABOR AND THERE'S NO CHANCE THEY'LL GO TO THE POLICE.

TRUE. AND YOU, DEBORAH, WILL TAKE THIS ONE'S PLACE.

"DEBORAH SLIPPED INTO THE GROUP--ANOTHER LOST FACE IN A SEA OF LOST FACES--JUST AS A SEDAN PULLED UP, CHROME GLEAMING IN THE MOONLIGHT...

"... AND ITS OWNER HEAVED HIS CORPULENT FRAME FROM THE BACK SEAT.

"IF A WORM COULD SPEAK--ITS VOICE WOULD BE EMIL VELDT'S...

"MINUTES LATER AN INNOCUOUS-LOOKING MOVING VAN ARRIVED-- AND UNMARKED CRATES OF DEATH WERE LOADED IN...

"WHEN VELDT'S UNHOLY ENTOURAGE LEFT-- THEY WERE UNAWARE THAT MISHKIN WAS FOLLOWING FROM A SAFE DISTANCE BEHIND...

...GUIDED FROM THE AIR BY A LEATHER-WINGED OBSCENITY THAT-- MOMENTS BEFORE-- HAD BEEN A MAN NAMED ANDREW BENNETT...

"THE JOURNEY ENDED-- NOT IN SOME SHADOWY WEST SIDE WAREHOUSE-- BUT AT A SECLUDED RESIDENCE IN THE AFFLUENT SUBURB OF OYSTER BAY, LONG ISLAND...

"MUSTERING HIS MINIMAL, OILY CHARM-- VELDT GREETED HIS NERVOUSLY-SMILING HOST..."

AH, ANTHONY-- HOW ARE YOU?

JUST FINE, MR. VELDT.

AND LOUISA... (SNIFF)... AND THE CHILDREN? THEY ARE FINE, TOO?

COULDN'T BE BETTER.

WONDERFUL! LET ME JUST PAY MY YOUNG FRIENDS FOR THEIR... (SNIFF)... TIME AND EFFORT AND WE CAN RETIRE WITHIN TO CHAT.

LOUISA'S STILL UP, MR. VELDT. SHE'S MADE SOME OF THAT TURKISH COFFEE YOU LOVE SO MUCH.

"THEY BANTERED CASUALLY-- AS IF BOXES OF TOYS, NOT HEROIN-- HAD JUST BEEN SECRETED AWAY IN THE HOUSE'S DANK BASEMENT...

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AS THE TRUCK ROARED OFF, VELDT'S 'YOUNG FRIENDS' WERE UNAWARE THAT DEBORAH WAS NOT ONE OF *THEIR OWN* -- UNAWARE OF THE *TRAP* WE HAD PLANNED FOR THEM..."

HEY, MAN! MOVE THAT FREAKIN' CAR OR I'LL RUN IT OFF THE *ROAD!*

ATLAS

"BUT THEIR IGNORANCE SOON *FADED*..."

I DARESAY YOU'LL DO NOTHING OF THE *KIND*, MISCREANT!

AH, *GEEZ* -- WE GOT AN OLD *FOREIGNER* WITH A *MACHO* COMPLEX HERE!

ATLAS

"...IN THE LIGHT OF OUR UNRELENTING *FURY*..."

ALWAYS THE FOOLISH MISTAKE *AGE* FOR DODDERING *WEAKNESS!*

SHALL WE TEACH THEM THE ERROR OF THEIR *WAYS*, MISHKIN?

"I *LOOKED* INTO THAT PATHETIC, FRIGHTENED, *DEFEATED* FACE...

"...AND THAT NIGHT I FINALLY *UNDERSTOOD*...

LEARN, CHILD, THE LESSONS OF PAIN THAT IT HAS TAKEN ME *FOUR HUNDRED YEARS* TO ASSIMILATE!

"...YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A *VAMPIRE* -- TO BE *UNDEAD*..."

IT'S TIME, VELDT... IT'S *TIME*...

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"BLOOD BOILING WITH RAGE, I *RETURNED* TO THE HOUSE. I WANTED EMIL VELDT TO *PAY* FOR WHAT HIS POISON HAD DONE TO SO MANY *FRABILE LIVES* AND SO LAID IN WAIT FOR HIM *OUTSIDE*...

"...BUT THEN SOMETHING GAVE ME *PAUSE*..."

MOMMY...?

DONNIE-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT OF *BED*?

I DON'T *FEEL* SO GOOD, MOMMY. MY *STOMACH* HURTS.

MY BOY'S GOT A *BELLY ACHE*, HUH? WELL, C'MERE, CHAMP--LET'S SEE WHAT YOUR *OLD MAN* CAN DO FOR YOU!

ANTHONY... MRS. RIZZO... IF I *MAY*...

...LET *ME*...:SNIFF:... SPEAK TO THE BOY...

HELLO, DONNIE. MY NAME IS *MR. VELDT*...

UH... HI...

"I WAS *AGHAST*...

"A CHILD... THE LAST BASTION OF *INNOCENCE*...

"...SITTING IN THE *LAP OF CORRUPTION*...

"...SWEET INNOCENCE DE-FILED BY THE BREATH OF *FOULNESS*...

"...I COULD NOT BEAR THE *SIGHT* OF IT!"

NO!

...BENNETT...

"BUT, FOR THE MOMENT, EVEN THE VILE EMIL VELDT LOST IMPORTANCE TO ME...

YOU, SIR, ARE AN IDIOT!

YOU HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH A WIFE-- A FAMILY-- WITH THAT RAREST OF JEWELS CALLED LOVE...

...IF YOU DO NOT TURN AWAY FROM VELDT AND HIS NOXIOUS BREED-- ALL YOU HOLD DEAR WILL BECOME TAINTED AND DIE...

...AND EVEN THE PITEOUS HELL OF THE JUNKIE WILL SEEM LIKE HEAVEN TO YOU! YOU WILL--

ANDREW! VELDT BECAME A BAT! HE'S GETTING AWAY!

AND YOU WASTE TIME ON SERMONS! ACH!

I'LL TAKE CARE OF VELDT, BUT FIRST...

"...THERE WAS SOMETHING I HAD TO DO...

"I DRAGGED THOSE DAMNED CRATES UP FROM THE BASEMENT AND SET THEM ABLAZE. I ONLY PRAY THAT ANTHONY RIZZO'S LIFE IN THE 'MOON' WAS CONSUMED IN THOSE WRITHING FLAMES...

"DAWN WAS LESS THAN AN HOUR AWAY WHEN THE SLOW-MOVING EMIL VELDT REACHED HIS OPULENT APARTMENT ON CENTRAL PARK SOUTH...

I MUST HAVE MY FI-- WHAT?

THE SAFE!

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING, EMIL?

BENNETT... HOW...?

IT WAS OBVIOUS, EMIL. YOU'VE BEEN FEEDING ON YOUR LOYAL ADDICTS-- AND NOW YOU ARE AS INFECTED AS THEY ARE...

"...HE WAS IN TEARS...

"...BUT I HELD THE WHIMPERING SCUM THERE-- AS THE MINUTES FLED BY... AND FINALLY..

BENNETT...!SNIFF!... PLEASE... I NEED IT!

YOU NEED IT, EMIL...

...THEN BY ALL MEANS-- TAKE IT!

"HE LEAPED LIKE A STARVED CAT CHASING A SCAMPERING RAT...

"...AND-- CLUTCHING HIS PRECIOUS POISON-- EMIL VELDT AT LAST FELT THE WARMTH OF THE SUN ON HIS WEATHERED FLESH...

"I HAD ESCAPED A SIMILAR DISTASTEFUL FATE BY MERE MOMENTS...

"SWOOPING AS MIST TO THE STREET BELOW-- WHERE MISHKIN AND DEBORAH WAITED AS PRE-ARRANGED..

"NO LIGHT COULD PIERCE THE CAR'S SPECIALLY-TREATED REAR WINDOWS AND I WAS SAFE IN MY MOMENT OF TRIUMPH...

"...FOR IN EMIL VELDT'S APARTMENT I HAD UNCOVERED CERTAIN 'BLOOD RED MOON' DOCUMENTS THAT GAVE HINTS AS TO THE NATURE OF THE NEBULOUS PROJECT: INTERIOR...

"BUT TOMORROW WOULD BE TIME ENOUGH FOR THAT...

"...AND SO I GAVE MYSELF UP TO THE SLEEP OF THE ETERNALLY CURSED... AND DREAMED OF MY MARY...

THE END...OF CHAPTER TWO!

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DO YOU DARE ENTER...

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY™

50¢
ALL NEW!
NO. 293
JUNE

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

A NEW "I...VAMPIRE" THRILLER:

THE BURNING!

"400 YEARS AGO, MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY, SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET... WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...VAMPIRE!™

"IN A FETID, DAMP WINE-CELLAR BENEATH MY EAST SIDE TOWNHOUSE, I SOBBED TEARLESSLY, MY USUALLY SALLOW CHEEKS FLUSHED WITH HOT SHAME...

"...FOR THE HUNGER WAS UPON ME: THE DEGENERATE, UNRELENTING CRAVING THAT COULD ONLY BE SATIATED BY THE FOUL-YET-TANTALIZING TASTE OF HUMAN BLOOD...

"KNEELING THERE IN THE WAVERING LIGHT, I CURSED MYSELF FOR WHAT I WAS... AND FOR THE DARK PLEASURE THIS MOST BASE OF ACTS WAS BRINGING ME...

CHAPTER THREE: THE BURNING!

J.M. DeMATTEIS writer/creator . TOM SUTTON artist . JOHN COSTANZA letterer . ADRIENNE ROY colorist

"LUST FED, I PULLED MYSELF, TREMBLING AND SICKENED, TO MY FEET, THINKING OF THE PATHETIC WRETCHES WHO GLADLY SOLD ME THEIR PRECIOUS LIFESBLOOD IN EXCHANGE FOR HANDFULS OF GOLD AND SILVER...

"IN MY WEAKNESS, I WONDERED ABOUT THE TOO-DISTANT GOD WHO ALLOWED SUCH THINGS TO COME TO PASS ON HIS EARTH... AND BLASPHEMED AGAINST HIS NAME...

"BUT IN THE NEXT INSTANT, I SAW MY AWFUL ERROR: THIS WAS NOT THE LORD'S WORK, BUT SATAN'S. IT WAS HIS CONSUMING SHADOW THAT KEPT THE DIVINE FACE EVER OBSCURED FROM MY VIEW...

"AND THEN I DROVE ALL RUMINATIONS AWAY...

"...AND GREETED MY ASSOCIATES...

DEBORAH... MISHKIN... I AM SORRY FOR THE DELAY BUT I HAD SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO ATTEND TO...

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, ANDREW. I WAS JUST STUDYING THIS PAINTING OF YOU AND MARY. IT'S LOVELY.

YOU BOTH LOOK SO...

...INNOCENT?

YES.

WE DID NOT *TAKE* OURSELVES TO BE SUCH, BUT-- LOOKING *BACK*-- IT IS CLEAR THAT WE POSSESSED A PURITY OF SPIRIT THAT I WOULD *KILL* TO *REGAIN*...

ACH! YOU SPEAK IN CONTRADICTIONS AS GREAT AS YOUR ILLOGICAL LOVE FOR A WOMAN MORE *BEAST* THAN *HUMAN!*

MY ENTIRE *LIFE* IS ONE UNFATHOMABLE CONTRADICTION, MISHKIN-- BUT THAT IS NONE OF YOUR *CONCERN*

THIS BOOK-- ON THE OTHER HAND--*IS*.

WHAT *IS* IT, ANDREW?

"*I* FOUND IT WHEN I RANSACKED EMIL VELDT'S * *WALLSAFE*-- SECRETED AWAY BENEATH HIS MUCH-NEEDED *HEROIN*...

"*IT* BEARS THE MARK OF MARY'S UNHOLY AGENCY...' *THE BLOOD RED MOON.*

* ONE OF THE QUEEN OF BLOOD'S *OPERATIVES*, DEFEATED BY BENNETT IN *H.O.M.#291*

"*A*PPARENTLY VELDT WAS ORDERED TO CHANNEL THE PROFITS FROM HIS *DRUG SMUGGLING* OPERATION INTO A VARIETY OF AREAS... FROM *POLITICAL PARTIES* TO *RELIGIOUS CULTS* AND *BEYOND*...

"*W*HETHER THESE SUNDRY AGGREGATIONS ARE KNOWING OR WILLING *ALLIES* OF THE MOON IS *UNCLEAR*...

AMERICAN FREEDOM PARTY

Children of Light

Representative Ellie Lyons

"*B*UT WE *HAD* TO INVESTIGATE. *PROJECT: INTERIOR*, THE MALEFIC *SCHEME* MARY HAD SET INTO MOTION, WAS DOUBTLESS PROGRESSING *RAPIDLY*...

"*A*ND, AT THAT POINT, WE HAD NO IDEA WHAT IT WAS MY BLOOD-MADDENED LOVER WAS *PLANNING*...

GOOD. WE ARE ALMOST *THERE*.

KYBER, N.Y. 5 MILES

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, ANDREW-- WHAT ARE WE DOING *HERE?* WHAT THREAT CAN A SMALL UPSTATE TOWN *POSSIBLY* POSE TO US?

HAVE YOU BATTLED THE *"MOON"* SO *LONG*, DEBORAH-- WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS WITHIN THE MOST VERDANT *PASTURES* THAT THEY HIDE THEIR DEADLIEST *ASPS...?*

ONE OF THE GROUPS ON VELDT'S LIST WAS THE *AMERICAN FREEDOM PARTY*-- A COLLECTION OF SMALL-MINDED SOUTHERN RACISTS LED BY AN IGNORAMUS NAMED *Q.B. STONEWALL...*

...AND--AS OF *LATE*--STONEWALL HAS TAKEN HIS CAMPAIGN FOR WHITE SUPERIORITY TO THE *NORTH...*

TOWNE

Q.B. STONEWALL OF THE AMERICAN FREEDOM PARTY *WILL SPEAK TONIGHT*

ACH! AND I SEE THE APPEAL OF HIS BRAND OF NOXIOUS GARBAGE IS NOT *LIMITED* TO ANY PARTICULAR *CLIME!* WE MUST BE *WARY* AMONG THESE WOLVES.

INDEED.

HOW CAN WE BE EXPECTED TO SIT BACK AND WATCH THIS ONCE-GREAT NATION OF OURS BEING RUN INTO THE *GROUND* BY THE JEWS, THE BLACKS, THE MEXICANS, THE CHINESE...

...*ALL* THE IMPURE RACES THAT HAVE *DRAGGED* US INTO THE DIRT!

YOU'VE ALL SEEN-- YOU'VE ALL *WATCHED!* THE WORLD LAUGHS AT US-- TREATS US LIKE A *SECOND-RATE* POWER!

OUR OWN PEOPLE ARE FORCED TO LIVE FROM HAND TO MOUTH BECAUSE THE HUMAN DIRT TAKES THE *FOOD* FROM OUR VERY *TABLES!*

I CAN FEEL IT IN THE *AIR*, DEBORAH... MISHKIN... THE STENCH OF THE *UNDEAD!* THE *FOULNESS* CARRIED IN THAT LITTLE PIG'S *EVERY WORD!*

I CANNOT SIT HERE AND *LISTEN* TO THIS MENDACIOUS MONSTER...!

I MUST...

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"...EXPLODE? I NEARLY DID, AND MY IRASCIBLE TEMPERMENT WOULD HAVE EXPOSED US FAR TOO SOON. BUT MY EXPLOSION WAS CHECKED BY A GREATER OUTBURST IN THE REAR...

WHY YOU SELF RIGHTEOUS LITTLE PEACOCK!

WHO ARE YOU, BOY--AND WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE AMONG YOUR BETTERS?

THE NAME IS OLIVE, PEACOCK--STATE SENATOR EUGENE OLIVE--AND I CAME HERE TO TELL YOU THAT WE WON'T ABIDE YOUR KIND IN THIS TOWN...

I'VE LIVED HERE MY ENTIRE LIFE--AND YOUR LINE JUST WON'T CUT IT WITH THESE FOLKS!

"ONE LOOK AT THE FRUSTRATED FACES AMONG THE ASSEMBLED CROWD WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO CONVINCE THE YOUNG SENATOR THAT HE WAS SADLY MISTAKEN...

"--BUT HE NEVER GOT THE CHANCE TO LOOK AS...

BOY--YOU ARE A... GYARGH! MISS SMITH--H-HELP ME...!

Q.B.--WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?

CH-CHEST... PAINS... HEART...

"STONEWALL'S THEATRICS WERE EXPERT, AND THEY SERVED TO BREAK UP THE MEETING BEFORE THINGS GOT...

GOOD LORD, THAT WOMAN...

"...OUT OF HAND...?

EXIT

"THE NEXT HOURS WERE SPENT OBSERVING STONEWALL'S HOTEL, WAITING FOR SOME SIGN OF VAMPIRIC ACTIVITY...

"DEBORAH AND MISHKIN REMAINED IN THE CAR, THE OLD RUSSIAN BROODING, LOST IN BLEAK AND TROUBLED THOUGHTS...

"WHILE I KEPT CLOSER WATCH IN MY OWN WAY...

"AND AT LAST...

...THE SLIME MADE HIS MOVE...

"I FOLLOWED SWIFTLY BY AIR, JUST IN TIME TO SEE STONEWALL RENDEZVOUS WITH SOME OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE WHO HAD ATTENDED HIS LUNATIC MEETING...

"BUT THE SCOUNDREL SAW ME, AS WELL...

"...AND ASCENDED, LIKE A DEVIL-GOD, THE FIRES OF DEATH GLOWING IN HIS EYES...

"AND WHILE I SWOOPED THROUGH THE MOONLIT SKY, LOCKED IN SAVAGE BATTLE WITH MY MARY'S PAWN...

"...THE PAWN'S PAWNS CAPERED LIKE SAVAGES, EXULTING IN THEIR MINDLESS HATRED...

"...PROVING THAT LIGHT ILLUMINATING DARKNESS...

"...IS NOT ALWAYS A SYMBOL OF HOPE...

"MY ADVERSARY WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED; THERE WOULD BE TIME LATER TO DEAL WITH HIM. AND SO I SOUGHT OUT THAT PROFANE LIGHT...

"ONLY TO FIND THAT A BLAZING CRUCIFIX BARRED MY WAY...

"LUCKILY THERE WERE OTHERS WHO WERE NOT SO CONFINED... AND THEY DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE...

"DEBORAH PROVING THAT WOMAN IS FAR FROM THE FRAIL CREATURE WE TOOK HER TO BE IN THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH...

"MISHKIN PROVING THAT HIS OFT-SPOKEN WORDS OF CAUTION APPLIED ONLY TO THOSE AROUND HIM...

"I AM NOT ONE TO EXPRESS EMOTION EASILY, AND AS SUCH GAVE LITTLE VERBAL ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE TWO HUMANS THAT CAME CLOSEST TO BEING CALLED MY FRIENDS...

"BUT, AT THAT MOMENT, I WANTED NOTHING MORE THAN TO EMBRACE THEM BOTH...

"...SPEAKING WARMLY AND WITH LOVE...

"I WANTED...

"...BUT COULD NOT...

OH MY GOD...

...NO...!

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"IT BECAME PAINFULLY OBVIOUS THAT SENATOR OLIVE HAD BEEN THE TARGET OF THE UNTHINKING MOB AND ITS MASTERS IN 'THE BLOOD RED MOON.'

LOUISE! OH LOUISE--MY WIFE! SHE'S IN THERE!

THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO BE DONE, SENATOR... SHE'S GONE.

"RAGE RISING UP IN A PRIMORDIAL HAZE, I SPREAD MY LEATHERN WINGS, FIGHTING BACK THE CHILL NIGHT WINDS, HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE HOTEL WHERE I KNEW THE WOUNDED STONEWALL MUST BE...

"YET, HAD I REMAINED FOR A MOMENT, PERHAPS I WOULD NOT HAVE CENTERED ALL MY VENGEANCE ON ONE PERSON ALONE...

"BUT I WAS AS BLINDED BY MY FURY AS I HAD EARLIER BEEN BLINDED BY BLOODLUST...

STONEWALL!

AMBU

"...STILL STUMBLING THROUGH SATAN'S SHADOW...

YOU WILL PAY THE PRICE NOW-- YOU WRETCHED SLUG! I WILL HAVE YOUR HEAD!

GOOD GOD-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING? STOP!

THIS DEMON IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TRAGEDY THAT HAS ROCKED YOUR TOWN THIS NIGHT!

YOU IDIOT! THIS MAN IS DEAD-- AND HE'S BEEN DEAD FOR SEVERAL HOURS!

NOW LET HIM GO!

AMB

"DEAD? WHAT I HAD TAKEN FOR AN ACT EARLIER... HAD BEEN SINCERE? THEN WHO, I WONDERED, DID I GRAPPLE WITH NEAR THE CLOUDS?

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"...AND INSTANTLY I REALIZED JUST HOW BLIND MY INSANE HATRED HAD LEFT ME...

OF...

...COURSE!!

"I HAD BEEN SEEING EVIL WHERE I *WANTED* TO SEE IT, FORGETTING THAT HUMAN AND UNDEAD ARE ALL-TOO-OFTEN *INDISTINGUISHABLE*...

"YES, I HAD BECOME A *SLAVE* TO UNCONTROLLABLE *PASSIONS* IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE...

YOU--THE ONE CALLED *SMITH*--STONEWALL'S AIDE--*YOU* ARE THE DEARG-DUL--THE VAMPIRIC *SCUM!*

...AND WHAT ARE *YOU*... BENNETT... A *PRIEST?*

WHAT AM *I?* I AM YOUR *ENDING*...

...YOUR FINAL *SLEE*--

YOU WILL BE NO SUCH *THING*, BENNETT--NO SUCH THING AT *ALL!*

GOD *FORGIVE* ME--I CANNOT LET YOU *DESTROY* HER!

"NOW I UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING...

"...MISHKIN'S STRANGE *REACTION* AT THE MEETING, HIS TENACIOUS SILENCE DURING OUR *WATCH*...

GO NOW, WOMAN--GO BEFORE I CHANGE MY *MIND!* PLEASE GO...

"HOW COULD MISHKIN LET ME DESTROY HIS...

...MOTHER...

MOTHER...?

"AND THE DARKNESS DREW TIGHTER AROUND US."

DO YOU DARE ENTER...

NO. 295 AUG. 50 ALL NEW!

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

A BRAND NEW "I...VAMPIRE" STUNNER!

NIGHT OF THE BLOOD RED MOON!

"900 YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY, SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET... WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...Vampire!

"WE DROVE ALONG IN STRAINED **SILENCE**; A SILENCE PUNCTUATED ONLY BY THE STEADY BEAT OF RAIN ACROSS THE WINDSHIELD AND THE COUNTERPOINT OF THUNDER, ROLLING OMINOUSLY ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY...

"IN THE FRANTIC HOURS **BEFORE**;* WE HAD SMASHED ANOTHER ARM OF MY MARY'S UNREGENERATE AGENCY, "**THE BLOOD RED MOON.**" BUT THE **COST** OF OUR VICTORY MAY HAVE BEEN THE **SOUL** OF THE OLD RUSSIAN... **DMITRI MISHKIN**...

CHAPTER FOUR: MOTHER LOVE/ MOTHER HATE!

*SEE HOUSE OF MYSTERY #293, "THE BURNING".

J. M. DeMATTEIS writer/creator — TOM SUTTON artist — ADRIENNE ROY colorist — JOHN COSTANZA letterer

"THE CRISIS HAD COME WHEN I CORNERED THE UNDEAD "MOON" OPERATIVE WHO HAD BEEN MANIPULATING THE RACIST POLITICAL GROUP CALLED THE AMERICAN FREEDOM PARTY. AS I PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE WITCH...

"...MISHKIN BURST INTO THE ROOM, WIELDING A DAMNABLE CRUCIFIX, SENDING SPASMS OF PAIN COURSING THROUGH MY BODY...

"...AND ALLOWING THE VAMPIRESS TO ESCAPE IN THE FORM OF A WOLF...

"...THE VAMPIRESS WHO, HE REVEALED, WAS NONE OTHER THAN HIS...

...MOTHER...

"MISHKIN HAD WITHDRAWN INTO HIMSELF AFTER THAT, BECOMING SULLEN AND UNCOMMUNICATIVE. IT WAS CLEAR THAT HIS UNCONTROLLABLE BETRAYAL OF OUR CAUSE WAS EATING HIM ALIVE...

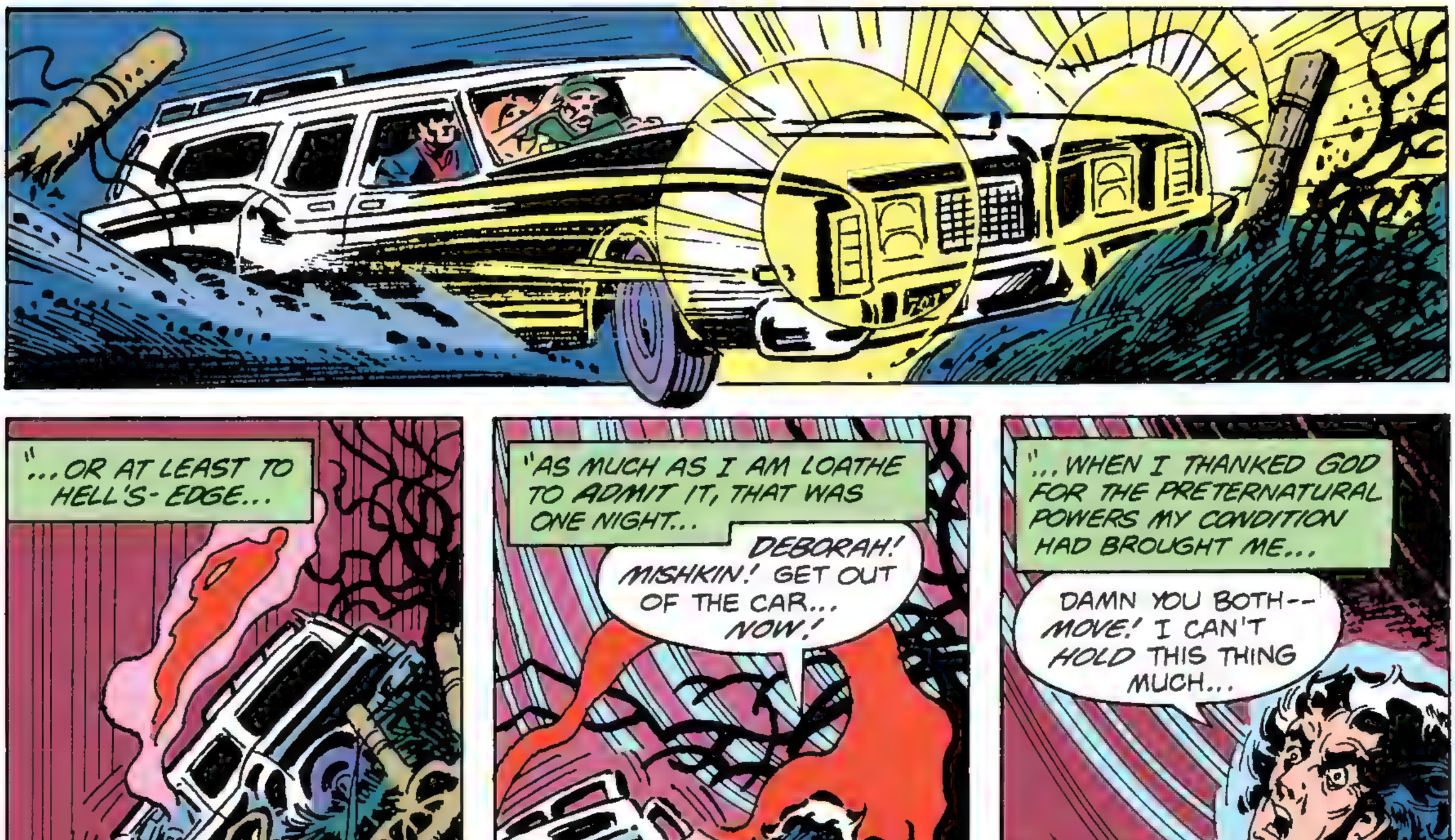
"...AND I KNEW THAT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE BEFORE THE DEMONS GNAWING AT HIS GUTS DROVE HIM, DROVE ALL OF US...

MISHKIN--LOOK OUT! THAT CAR!

WHA--EH?!

"...STRAIGHT ON...

...TO HELL...



"...OR AT LEAST TO HELL'S-EDGE...

"AS MUCH AS I AM LOATHE TO ADMIT IT, THAT WAS ONE NIGHT...

DEBORAH! MISHKIN! GET OUT OF THE CAR... NOW!

"...WHEN I THANKED GOD FOR THE PRETERNATURAL POWERS MY CONDITION HAD BROUGHT ME...

DAMN YOU BOTH-- MOVE! I CAN'T HOLD THIS THING MUCH...

...LONGER!!

"BUT OF COURSE, GOD HAD VERY LITTLE TO DO WITH IT...

ACH! HE DRIVES ON WITHOUT EVEN *PAUSING* TO SEE IF WE'RE ALIVE OR *DEAD*!

THE INHERENT *DECENCY* OF THE MODERN WORLD...

I DON'T REALLY *CARE* ABOUT THAT...!

WHAT I *DO* CARE ABOUT IS BREAKING THIS GAME OF *SECRETS*!

MISHKIN MUTTERS SOMETHING ABOUT HIS *MOTHER* AND THEN TURNS INTO LIVING STONE -- AND *YOU*, ANDREW, JUST STAND THERE WITH THAT KNOWING *GLINT* IN YOUR EYES!

IT IS NOT MY *PLACE* TO SPEAK OF THIS. IF MISHKIN WISHES TO HOLD HIS *TONGUE* I CANNO--

NO! NO -- DEBORAH IS *CORRECT*! I *MUST* SPEAK OF THIS! I MUST *UNBURDEN* MYSELF!

PERHAPS TELLING HER WILL HELP ME TO SORT OUT THE CONFLICTING FEELINGS FIGHTING FOR POSSESSION OF MY *HEART*!

HAVE YOU NOT *WONDERED*, DEBORAH -- JUST *WHY* A MAN OF MY AGE SPENDS HIS DOTAGE IN *BATTLE* WITH SUB-HUMAN *THINGS*?

HAVE YOU NOT WONDERED WHAT *HORRORS* LURK BENEATH THE SURFACE OF *DMITRI MISHKIN*?

"'THEN WONDER,' HE SAID, 'NO LONGER,' AND PROCEEDED TO TELL THE HEART-RENDING TALE I KNEW ALMOST AS WELL AS MY OWN...

..THE TALE THAT BEGAN IN A SMALL, STORM-SHROUDED RUSSIAN VILLAGE, NOT LONG AFTER THE TURN OF THIS CENTURY...

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"THE BAYING OF THE WOLVES WAS WILD THAT NIGHT, AS IT HAD BEEN FOR THE TEN NIGHTS PREVIOUS; A CHORUS OF SHRIEKS AND YELPS THAT ENCIRCLED THE TOWN, SEEMING TO LOCK THE PEASANTS IN THEIR PATHETIC HOVELS WITH A CHAIN OF FEAR...

"AND, IN ONE HOUSE IN PARTICULAR, THE FEAR BURNED BRIGHT AS THE MOON, FOR THERE WAS AN ANIMAL OF A DIFFERENT KIND WITHIN...

WHY DO YOU STAND THERE *GAPING* LIKE A FRIGHTENED IDIOT, DUNYA? HAVE YOU NEVER SEEN *SNOW* BEFORE?

H-HUSBAND... THE WOLVES HAVE SLAIN *SIX* OF OUR NEIGHBORS THESE EVENINGS PAST...

CAN YOU *BLAME* ME FOR MY FRIGHT?

IVAN PAVLOVITCH MISHKIN KNOWS NO FEAR--SO WHY SHOULD HIS *WIFE?*

YOU ARE WEAK, WOMAN--NOT THE PROUD GIRL I THOUGHT I MARRIED!

BIBLE

AND YOU ARE NOT THE MAN *I* MARRIED, IVAN PAVLOVITCH--YOU ARE A SWAGGERING, DRUNKEN *MONSTER!*

WHAT? YOU *DARE* SAY SUCH A THING TO ME?

YOU DARE?!

MOTHER!!

YOU! YOU ARE A MONSTER--AS SHE *SAYS!* A MONSTER NOT WORTHY ENOUGH TO KISS HER *FEET!*

"ON ANOTHER NIGHT, IVAN WOULD HAVE LOST CONTROL; BEATEN THE BOY INTO A QUIVERING PULP; BUT NOT THIS NIGHT...

"...FOR THE VODKA HAD DONE ITS JOB ALL TOO *PERFECTLY...*

YOU ARE RIGHT, LITTLE ONE. I AM *NOT* WORTHY...

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...NOT WORTHY IN THE *LEAST*...

"THE SICK-HEARTED PROFLIGATE LOST HIMSELF IN VIOLENT, TORTURED SOBS... AND THEN GAVE HIMSELF UP TO SLEEP...

I *HATE* HIM, MOTHER-- I *HATE* HIM!

NEVER *SAY* THAT, CHILD. NEVER LET ME HEAR MY LITTLE MITYA *SAY* THAT.

YOUR FATHER HAS HAD A *HARD* LIFE-- HE CANNOT *HELP* WHAT HE'S BECOME. I SHOULD NEVER HAVE *CALLED* HI--

"BUT DUNYA NEVER FINISHED HER SENTENCE...

"...FOR A FRANTIC POUNDING AND TERRIFIED SHOUTING DREW HER ATTENTION AWAY...

HELP ME! IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT'S HOLY-- *HELP ME!*

THE WOLVES ARE AT MY BACK!

"WITHOUT *HESITATION*, LITTLE DMITRI'S MOTHER THREW OPEN THE DOOR. HOW COULD SHE DO ANY LESS?

GET IN-- *QUICKLY!*

OH THANK YOU-- YOU ARE AN *ANGEL!*

"IT WAS ONE OF THE LAST DECENT ACTS OF HER LIFE...

"THE MYSTERIOUS WOMAN SHOOK OFF THE SNOW FROM HER SHAWL AND BOOTS, STOOD, UNMOVING, LIMNED EERILY IN THE LIGHT OF THE FIRE, SPEAKING IN A VOICE BOTH GENTLE AND IRRESISTIBLE...

I WAS ON MY WAY TO *PETERSBURG*... TO STAY WITH *FRIENDS*...

...THE WOLVES *ATTACKED* THE COACH... *KILLED* MY DRIVER... I *RAN*...

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IF I MAY INTRUDE UPON YOU *FURTHER*...

...I WOULD LIKE TO *REST* HERE TONIGHT... TAKE *BREAKFAST* IN THE *MORNING*...

... AND THEN BE ON MY WAY...

"MY MARY'S BEAUTY RADIATED LIKE A HOARY SUN GOING NOVA... AND IT WAS JUST AS DEADLY.

"LATER, AS NIGHT'S APEX APPROACHED..

"...IVAN PAVLOVITCH MISHKIN PROVED THAT HE WAS BEYOND ALL HOPE OF SALVATION...

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"...AND DIED A SHAME-FUL DEATH...

"...BUT FOR POOR DUNYA...

"...THE SHAME WAS JUST BEGINNING...

I WILL BE BACK!

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"MARY'S FOUL LAUGHTER DEFILED THE NIGHT, RINGING PAINFULLY IN LITTLE DMITRI'S EARS...

"... AND HE STILL HEARD IT ECHOING THREE NIGHTS LATER.

"WHAT PRIMAL INSTINCTS URGED THE BOY TO SIT IN RELENTLESS PRAYER OVER HIS MOTHER'S VIOLATED FORM, NEVER LEAVING HER SIDE ALL THAT TIME?

"PERHAPS THE SAME INSTINCTS...

"...THAT TELL US THAT...

"EVIL IS NEAR...

"...EVEN BEFORE IT HAS MATERIALIZED...

STAY AWAY, CHILD. I HAVE COME FOR WHAT IS MINE.

N-NO... YOU C-CANNOT HAVE HER...

STUPID CHILD--IT IS YOU THAT SHALL EVERMORE BE DENIED HER LOVE!

...MOTHER...?

COME, MY SWEET ONE...

MOTHER!

I COME... MISTRESS...

I AM YOURS...

...FOREVER!

NOT... FOREVER...

...I WILL FIND HER AGAIN...

...AND FREE HER IMMORTAL SOUL...

DO YOU MEAN THOSE WORDS, BOY?

"LITTLE DMITRI SUCKED IN HIS BREATH, CERTAIN THAT ANOTHER UNHUMAN DEMON HAD COME, PERHAPS TO TAKE HIM THIS TIME...

"...AND, IN MANY WAYS, HE WAS CORRECT...

ANSWER ME--DO YOU WANT TO FREE HER IMMORTAL SOUL AS YOU SAID...

...AND WILL YOU RISK YOUR OWN IN THE ATTEMPT?

"BUT THE BRAVE YOUNG FELLOW SENSED THAT THIS DEMON WAS DIFFERENT; THAT HE COULD HELP DMITRI GET HIS SWEET MOTHER BACK; AND SO HE ANSWERED...

...YES...

THEN COME...

...THERE IS MUCH WE MUST TALK ABOUT...

...MUCH YOU MUST...

"...LEARN," HE SAID. AND HE TAUGHT ME.

YOU MEAN--ALL THESE YEARS? WITH NO CHANCE FOR A LIFE OF YOUR OWN...?!

MY LIFE CAN NEVER BE MY OWN, DEAR DEBORAH...

...AS LONG AS HER SOUL IS NOT FREE...

"A NOBLE GOAL. I HAD DONE MY JOB WELL..."

END

NOW... MORE CHILLING PAGES of STORY AND ART!

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

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OCT.

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IS HE ON THE SIDE OF GOOD... OR EVIL?

FIND OUT IN A NEW "I...VAMPIRE" SHOCKER!

JOE KUBERT

"400 YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY, SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET... WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...VAMPIRE!

"LIGHT AND DARKNESS... GOD AND SATAN... EXULTANCE AND DESPAIR... SALVATION AND DEBASEMENT...

"...IN THE FOUR HUNDRED YEARS SINCE THE CURSE OF THE UNDEAD TRANSFORMED ME, I HAVE BEEN CONSUMED BY DUALITY: A SLAVE TO THE PULL OF TWIN FORCES WITHIN MY TORTURED HEART...

"MY SOUL BURNS IN THE PITS OF HELL AND YET I SEEM TO SERVE THE CAUSE OF HEAVEN, THE VERY HEAVEN THAT ETERNALLY DENIES ME ENTRANCE.

"WHY? WHY? WHY?

CHAPTER FIVE: ZEN FLESH! ZEN BONES!

J.M. DE MATTEIS writer/creator • TOM SUTTON artist • JOHN COSTANZA letterer • ADRIENNE ROY colorist

"THOSE QUESTIONS SEEMED TO LAUGH MOCKINGLY AS MY ASSISTANTS, DEBORAH DANCER AND DIMITRI MISHKIN, WALKED BESIDE ME ONE HOT AUGUST NIGHT...

"...THE THREAT OF THE 'BLOOD RED MOON' HANGING OVER US LIKE THE BLADE OF DAMASCUS...

ACH! MY SKIN CRAWLS TONIGHT--AS IF THE DAMNABLE UNDEAD WERE WATCHING US FROM THE TREES...

ANDREW--WILL THERE COME A TIME WHEN WE FINALLY DEFEAT THEM?

MY MARY'S PAWNS SEEM UNSTOPPABLE NOW, DEBORAH--BUT I SWEAR...

...ONE DAY THEY WILL WITHER PATHETICALLY IN THE LIGHT OF DAY... CRUSHED BY THE RIGHTEOUS WRATH OF THE...

...LORD...

"THIS LAST WORD LEAPED, UN-BIDDEN, FROM MY THROAT, PERHAPS CALLED UP BY THE GLORIOUS SIGHT BEFORE US...

...THE TEMPLE OF THE INEFFABLE TAO...

EVEN HALF IN RUIN IT'S BREATHTAKING.

"WE STOOD LIKE AWE-STRUCK CHILDREN, AND ONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT WE WERE IN A GLADE IN THE MYSTIC LANDS OF THE BUDDAH AND LAO-TZU...

"...INSTEAD OF JUST OUTSIDE THE SOMNOLENT TOWN OF PALOMA, IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA...

"I ALMOST LAUGHED AT THE STRANGE CROSS-POLLINATION THAT SO JOINED EAST AND WEST. INSTEAD, I REMEMBERED...

2

"...REMEMBERED THE BOOK I... RETRIEVED FROM THE SAFE OF 'MOON' OPERATIVE EMIL VELDT,* THE BOOK THAT LISTED DOZENS OF ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVING FUNDING FROM MY MARY'S NOXIOUS CULT...

*SEE "NIGHT OF THE LIVING UNDEAD" IN H.O.M. #291.

"... AND HOW THAT LIST HAD LED US INTO BATTLE AGAINST THE VILE RACISM OF THE VAMPIRE-INFILTRATED AMERICAN FREEDOM PARTY...*

*H.O.M. #293 "THE BURNING".

"ALSO ON THAT LIST WAS THE TEMPLE OF THE INEFFABLE TAO, A RESPECTED SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY THAT HAD SPENT THE PAST TWENTY YEARS TRANSPLANTING THE VENERABLE TRADITION OF ZEN FROM JAPANESE TO AMERICAN SOIL...

"IF THE VIRULENT UNDEAD STRAIN HAD INFECTED EVEN THIS HOLY PLACE...

"...PERHAPS 'THE MOON'S' DAYS WERE NOT AS NUMBERED AS I LIKED TO BELIEVE...

ABANDONED.

NO--WAIT. DON'T YOU HEAR IT?

3

"MUSIC. A PLAINTIVE, PATHETIC MUSIC THAT ECHOED THROUGH THOSE STARK CORRIDORS; EACH NOTE A DIRGE OF DESPAIR...

"... A DESPAIR AS GREAT AS MY OWN...

"WE DRANK IN THAT SAD SONG IN SILENCE, THE PLAYER AT FIRST UNAWARE OF OUR PRESENCE...

"BUT HIS LACK OF AWARENESS...

"...WAS ONLY MOMENTARY...

NO! GET OUT! HAVEN'T YOU DONE ENOUGH?!

"... AS WAS HIS MADNESS...

WE ARE FRIENDS.

NO...I CAN *FEEL* IT... YOU'RE JUST LIKE *THEM!*

FEEL *THIS*. THE TOUCH OF SOMEONE WHO *CARES*...

AND UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE *NOT* LIKE...*THEM*...

"DEBORAH'S WORDS, HER GENTLE TOUCH, *CONVINCED* HIM IN A WAY *I* NEVER COULD...

YES...I CAN *SEE* THAT NOW. IT'S JUST THAT-- THINGS HAVE BEEN SO *INSANE*...THOSE *DEVILS*...

WHAT DEVILS?

PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER TELL US *EVERYTHING*... FROM THE *BEGINNING*...

"WELL...I GUESS IT STARTED BACK IN THE *SIXTIES*. I WAS SCREWED-UP THEN--LIKE A *LOT* OF PEOPLE-- LOOKING FOR *ANSWERS*...

...AND SO OL' BILLY KESSLER GRABBED HIS GUITAR AND HIT THE ROAD. THAT ROAD EVENTUALLY LED TO JAPAN...

"...AND TO *MASTER SHOJU*. HE OPENED MY *EYES* TO A LOT OF THINGS... INITIATED ME INTO THE WAY OF *ZEN*...

"...WHEN IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE MASTER WOULD LEAD A MISSION TO AMERICA--I ACCOMPANIED HIM--HELPED HIM *ESTABLISH* THE TEMPLE OF THE INEFFABLE TAO...

"OUR YEARS HERE WERE *WONDERFUL*... MASTER SHOJU DREW THOUSANDS OF SEEKERS TO THE PATH--NEVER *ONCE* DISPLAYING ANY EGO OR FALSE PRIDE...

"...BUT THEN HE BEGAN TO CHANGE-- GROWING IRRITABLE--ALMOST SAVAGE IN HIS *DEMEANOR*. I KNEW THE *WOMAN* HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT.

WOMAN?

5

"YES, A MONTH AFTER SHE ARRIVED, MASTER SHOJU ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS CLOSING THE TEMPLE--THAT A SELECT GROUP OF DISCIPLES WOULD ACCOMPANY HIM AND FOUND A NEW TEMPLE SOMEWHERE UP THE COAST...

"WHEN I TRIED TO STOP HIM...HE LAUGHED AT ME--THEN THREATENED TO BREAK MY NECK! IF I WASN'T CERTAIN BEFORE--I KNEW THEN THAT MY MASTER...

...WAS NO LONGER *HUMAN*. NOR--I CAN ASSURE YOU--ARE THE DISCIPLES HE TOOK *WITH* HIM...

BUT WHY--I WONDER--DID HE SPARE *YOU*?

HE *DIDN'T*.

GOD HELP ME--HE *DIDN'T*.

"SO AT LAST I HAD FOUND AN ANOMALY LIKE MYSELF; ONE TRANSMOGRIFIED INTO A DEMON WHO YET CLUNG TENACIOUSLY TO THE MORAL CODE OF THE LIVING...

"MY HEART'S LOAD WAS LIGHTENED AS WE MADE THE SHORT JOURNEY UP THE COAST HIGHWAY TOWARD THAT RELOCATED NEST OF VIPERS... 6

NOW?

NOW!

"WE DID NOT THINK...

"...WE DID NOT PAUSE...

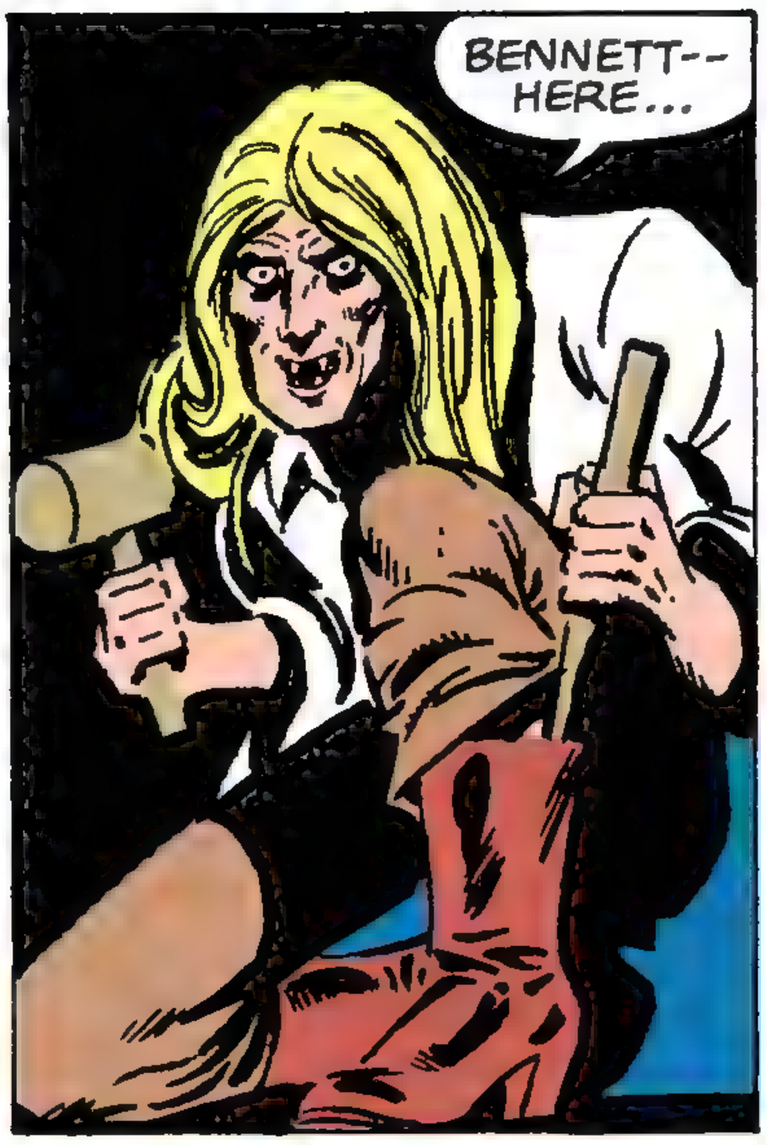
"...WE SIMPLY EXPLODED...

"...BEATING THEM BACK...

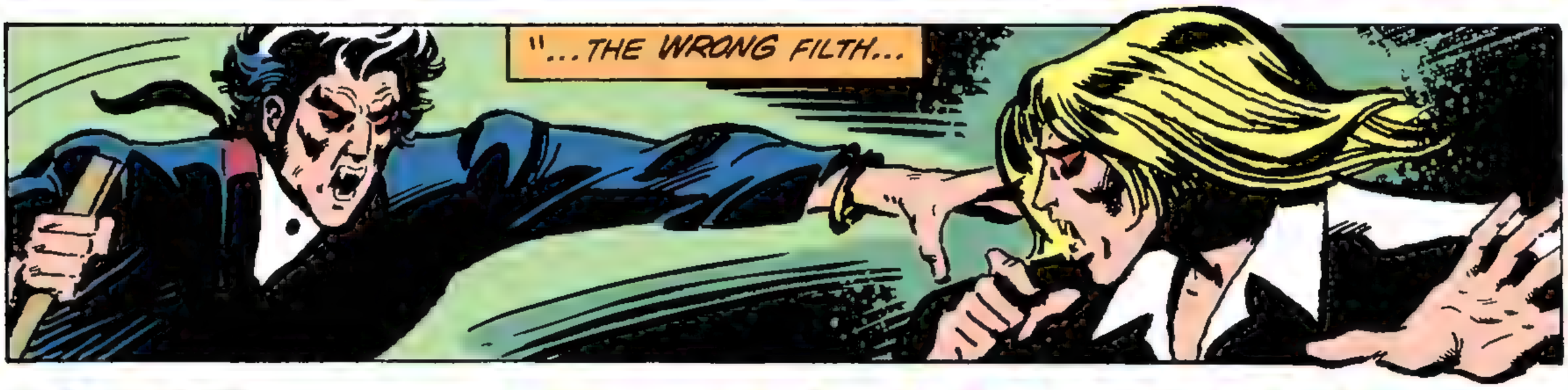
"...BEATING THEM DOWN...

"...VANQUISHING THE UNREGENERATE FILTH...

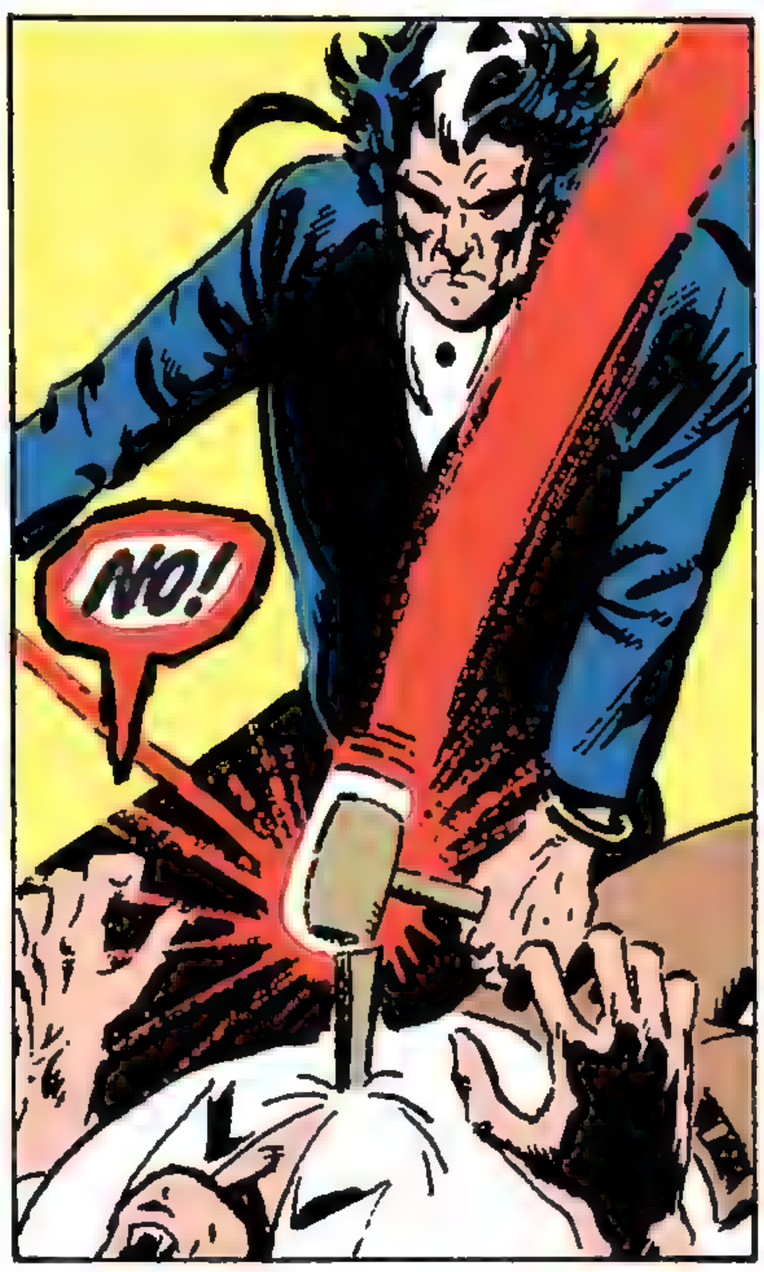
" FILTH?


BENNETT--
HERE...

...KILL
HIM!
"PERHAPS...


"...THE WRONG FILTH...

YOU...
DECEITFUL...


NO!

" YES.

...ANIMAL!!!

"I KNEW MY ACTIONS WERE *PROPER*, YET I COULD NOT HELP FEELING THAT I HAD JUST SLAIN A REFLECTION OF *MYSELF*...

DO NOT BECOME SWEPT UP IN SELF-*PITY*, CHILD...

...YOU ONLY DID WHAT THE TAO *DEMANDED* OF YOU...

...AS DID MY POOR *DISCIPLE*...

I...DON'T *UNDERSTAND*... YOU MEAN YOU'RE *NOT* VAMPIRES...

...*NOT* WITH "*THE MOON*?"

VAMPIRES WE *ARE*, CHILD...

...BUT AGENTS OF THAT UNHOLY BAND WE ARE *NOT*. *MONTHS* AGO THE WOMAN NAMED MARY CAME *AMONG* US--*SPREAD* HER DISEASE. BUT WE HAVE SPENT MUCH TIME IN *ZAZEN*--MUCH TIME IN UNION WITH THE *TAO*...

...EVEN *UNDEAD*--SUCH AS WE COULD NEVER BELONG TO *HER*. YOU *SENSED* THIS, ANDREW BENNETT - AS I *PRAYED* YOU WOULD...

POOR KESSLER *SUCCUMBED* TO "*THE MOON*"--BECAME AS *ONE* OF THEM...PROMISING HIS NEW MASTERS THAT HE WOULD WIPE US FROM THE FACE OF THE *EARTH*...

...BUT HE LACKED THE *COURAGE*. HE NEEDED *TOOLS* TO DO HIS WORK *FOR* HIM.

US.

YOUR PRESENCE IN PALOMA WAS UN-DOUBTEDLY NOTED BY "*THE MOON*"--AND SO POOR KESSLER SOUGHT TO *USE* YOU.

BUT YOU--YOU'RE ALL...

...LIKE *YOU*, ANDREW BENNETT? QUITE *SO*.

THERE MUST ALWAYS BE A *BALANCE*--A *YIN* TO COUNTERACT *YANG*. YOU... *WE*... HAVE BEEN SELECTED TO BE THAT.

SELECTED... BY *WHO*?

"BUT I ALREADY KNEW WHAT THE ANSWER TO THAT WOULD *BE*; JUST AS I KNEW THAT MY MISSION TO SMASH THE 'BLOOD RED MOON' AND SAVE MY MARY'S SOUL...HAD TAKEN ON NEW MEANING. AT LAST, THERE WAS HOPE..." *End* 10

DO YOU DARE ENTER...

ALL NEW! 60¢ U.K.20p | MORE PAGES! NO.299 DEC.

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

JOE KUBERT

IT'S THE ULTIMATE "I...VAMPIRE" ADVENTURE! NO ONE IS SAFE AS BENNETT GOES BERSERK!

"400 YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY, SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET.. WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS *TOO LATE*. ***I, ANDREW BENNETT...***

I...VAMPIRE!

"THE DAY WAS OVERCAST, SO I BEGAN EARLIER. THAT WAS GOOD BECAUSE I HAD A LONG WAY TO GO. ALSO, THE TRUCKERS WERE MORE INCLINED TO PICK ME UP IF THERE WERE STILL A FEW SCATTERED THREADS OF SUNLIGHT IN THE EVENING SKY."

"THERE WERE FASTER WAYS TO TRAVEL, CERTAINLY. I COULD HAVE FLOWN AND CAUGHT UP WITH MARY TWICE AS FAST THAT WAY. BUT I NEEDED TO ***SEE*** WHERE I WAS GOING... NEEDED TO FEEL MY WAY, LETTING THE HORROR AND DESTRUCTION MARY LEFT BEHIND GUIDE ME TO HER. I NEEDED THE CLOSE PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE SHE HAD AFFECTED--AND IN MOST CASES, ***INFECTED.***"

"BUT, THE HUNTER WAS ALSO THE HUNTED. MARY'S BLOOD RED MOON OPERATIVES WERE EVERYWHERE. ONLY BY BEING ***FURTIVE*** COULD I HOPE TO ELUDE THEM. TAKING TO THE AIR WOULD BE A DEAD GIVE-AWAY."

"ANDREW BENNETT DOES NOT FLY AS OTHER MEN FLY..."

THE SUN ALSO BURNS"

BRUCE JONES / WRITER | TOM SUTTON / ARTIST | Gaspar / LETTERER | ADRIENNE ROY / COLORIST | KAREN BERGER / EDITOR | CREATED BY J.M. DeMATTEIS

"AND JUST WHEN I THOUGHT ALL WAS HOPELESS, THE SPECK OF A VEHICLE APPEARED AS A ROLLING CLOUD OF DUST OUT OF THE VAST, ENDLESS HORIZON...

HOWDY! SUITCASE GETTING A BIT HEAVY, IS IT?

TO SAY THE LEAST! THANK YOU! I APPRECIATE THIS!

TOPEKA 60 MILES

I'M BOUND FOR HARPERSVILLE. YOU HEADED THAT WAY?

HARPERSVILLE? YES...YES, THAT WILL BE FINE.

MAN, YOU LOOK KINDA PALE, BEEN AT IT ALL DAY, HAVE YOU?

NAME'S KITNER, MATT KITNER...

ANDREW BENNETT. PLEASED.

YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE A NATIVE KANSAN, ANDREW. LET ME GUESS... CALIFORNIA!

VERY PERCEPTIVE.

I KNEW IT! COULD TELL BY THE CLOTHES! THE WIFE AND I VISITED THERE, FEW YEARS BACK. THAT'S HER ON THE SUN VISOR. PRETTY?

LOVELY.

YEAH, JUNE'S ONE IN A MILLION. YOU MARRIED, ANDREW?

MARRIED? N-NO... I'M...SEPARATED, YOU MIGHT SAY...

"AND STRANGELY, IT WAS NOT MY LOST LOVE, MARY, THAT I THOUGHT OF AT THAT MOMENT... IT WAS ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN SITTING NEXT TO A WHITE-HAIRED OLD MAN IN A PANEL TRUCK NOT UNLIKE THIS ONE..."

"HOW MANY LONELY, ENDLESS MONTHS AGO HAD IT BEEN NOW..."

BETTER TAKE A LOOK OUT BACK AGAIN, DEBORAH, THAT TAIL GATE SEEMED A BIT LOOSE TO ME...

RIGHT, MISHKIN!

IT'S FINE. I TIED THE COFFIN DOWN GOOD AND TIGHT.

I ONLY WISH THIS ROAD WEREN'T SO BUMPY...

I HOPE HE'S ABLE TO SLEEP...

HE'LL BE FINE I'M SURE. THOUGH I DO HATE THESE DAY-LIGHT JOURNEYS! THEY'RE POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS.

IF SOMETHING **SHOULD** HAPPEN TO THE TRUCK WHILE THE SUN IS--

MISHKIN!!

BRAKKA TAK TAK TAK! TAK A TAK A

BRATA TAK TAK TAK TAK KA

POK! POK! POK!

MY GOD, THE TIRES!

HOLD ON!

SCREEEEEEE

CRASH!

MISHKIN! MISHKIN! WAKE UP! WE'RE BEING SURROUNDED!

..GROAN...

WHO CAN IT BE? WHO WOULD BE FIRING ON US IN THE DAYLIGHT?

ONLY ONE ANSWER... MARY HAS ENLISTED LIVING HUMANS INTO THE BLOOD RED MOON-- DAYTIME GOONS TO KEEP THE OPERATION MOVING ROUND THE CLOCK! SMART!

THE OLD MAN'S RIGHT, SISTER. AND THE SOONER YOU TELL US WHERE YOU'RE HIDING YOUR BOYFRIEND, THE LESS PAINFUL WE'LL MAKE YOUR DEATH!

HEY, CHICK! OVER HERE!

JACKPOT!

YEAH! NOW, STAND CLEAR!

GET AWAY FROM HIM!

YEAH? AND WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT--

AGH!

HAUGH!

HEE!

HII-AHH!

CLUNK!

UH!

THE BOSS WARNED US ABOUT THESE TWO! KEEP AN EYE ON THE OLD MAN'S CANE!

COWARD!

NOW WATCH OUT FOR SPRAYING WOOD!

KA-POW-POW-POW-

TAK-TAK-TAK

YA FOOL! YA CAN'T KILL A VAMPIRE WITH BULLETS!

NO...BUT I CAN MAKE SURE HE DON'T USE THAT WOODEN BOX NO MORE!

KRUMP!

COME ON OUT, BENNETT OLD MAN!

ANDREW!!

EASY, POP, OR WE'LL VENTILATE YOU AND THE LADY RIGHT NOW!

BY HEAVEN, YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS!

"AS IT IS, WE WERE GOING TO LET YOU WATCH YOUR FRIEND HERE COME APART!"

5

ANDREW! OH, GOD, ANDREW!

S'MATTER, HONEY? AIN'T YOU NEVER SEEN A MAN *MELT* BEFORE?

I'LL TRACK EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU! I SWEAR IT!

YEAH? NOT IF YOU AIN'T GOT NO LEGS! SAY YER PRAYERS, GRANDPA! I'M GONNA--

HEY! *HEY!!*

EARTHQUAKE!!

DEBORAH! MY HAND!

I CAN'T! I'M SLIPPING!

"WITH A THUNDEROUS CRUNCH, THE ENORMOUS FISSURE CLOSED UP AGAIN, DUST AND ROCK BELCHING FROM BELOW...

NO!

...THEN ALL WAS STILLNESS ONCE MORE BENEATH THE WARM, CALIFORNIA SUN..."

DEBORAH...
DEBORAH...
DEBORAH...
DEBORAH...
DEBORAH... WAKE UP...
DEBORAH... IT'S ME, ANDREW.
ANDREW?...
YOU'RE ALIVE! WE'RE ALL ALIVE! WHAT HAPPENED?
WE FELL INTO A SUBTERRANEAN CAVE--A SORT OF POCKET UNDER THE EARTH'S CRUST AS BEST AS I CAN REASON!
ANDREW, YOU'RE BURNED! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN IN ANOTHER FEW MINUTES. I GUESS WE HAVE MOTHER NATURE TO THANK FOR THIS ONE!
MISHKIN TOLD ME ABOUT THE DAYLIGHT OPERATIVES. THAT'S GOING TO PUT A WHOLE NEW *LIGHT* ON THINGS, IF YOU'LL PARDON THE EXPRESSION.
THE BLOOD RED MOON OPERATIVES WEREN'T SO LUCKY.
WE'LL HAVE TO BE TWICE AS CAREFUL NOW WHEN MOVING ABOUT.
MOVING ABOUT? W-WE'RE SEALED IN!
NOT SEALED. THERE'S PLENTY OF AIR...
...AND SOMEONE IS BOUND TO SPOT THE TRUCK UP THERE.
IF IT'S THE *RIGHT* SOMEONE..
7

"SLOWLY, INEXORABLY TIME PASSED. NO ONE CAME TO HELP US. THE LITTLE SHAFTS OF SUNLIGHT FADED AS EVENING FILLED THE CALIFORNIA SKIES..."

WHERE ARE THEY, WHERE ARE THEY?

EASY...

SOMEONE WILL COME. HAVE A LITTLE FAITH...

"ANOTHER HOUR DRAGGED BY... I HADN'T DRUNK IN DAYS. I NEEDED TO GET BACK TO MY CALIFORNIA MANSION--

"--TO MY SUPPLY OF BOTTLED BLOOD.

WHY DON'T YOU AND MISHKIN TRY TO GET A LITTLE SLEEP? YOU'LL NEED IT FOR THE CLIMB OUT!

"ANOTHER HOUR... AND THEN THE DREADFUL BLOOD LUST STARTED RISING IN MY VEINS...

...AND I BEGAN THINKING ABOUT HOW LOVELY DEBORAH WAS... AS LOVELY AS MY MARY... HOW SERENE HER FACE, HOW DELICATE...

"...LORD HELP ME... I WAS BECOMING RAVENOUS!

"SWEET DEBORAH SLEEPING SO INNOCENTLY... HER SLENDER THROAT PULSING IN THE PALE LIGHT...

"...PULSING... PULSING, WITH RICH, RED BLOOD!...

"DEBORAH'S EYES FLUTTERED OPEN. FOR A HEARTBEAT WE STARED FROZEN AT EACH OTHER..."

A-ANDREW?? --W-WHAT IS IT?...

"AND I THEN DID THE ONLY THING I COULD DO..."

8

ANDREW... I...

LISTEN ! WHAT'S THAT ?

SOMEONE UP THERE DIGGING !

CAREFUL ... IT MIGHT BE MORE OF MARY'S MOB !

CRUNCH!

CRAACK!

HEY ! ANYBODY ALIVE DOWN THERE ?

IT'S THE POLICE ! I CAN SEE THEM !

THANK GOD !

YES !! WE'RE HERE !!

LISTEN TO ME, THERE'S A CRACK LARGE ENOUGH FOR ME TO SQUEEZE THROUGH IN BAT FORM NOW ! I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO MY MANSION IMMEDIATELY ! THEY'LL HAVE YOU OUT IN A FEW HOURS !

FINE ! WE'LL MEET YOU THERE !

BE CAREFUL, ANDREW !

WHAT IN BLAZES WAS THAT ? A BAT ?

ONLY IN YOUR BELFRY, MALLOY ! GET BACK TO WORK !

POLICE

9

"MINUTES LATER IN THE BOWELS OF MY BLOOD-FILLED "WINE" CELLAR ... I SATED MY UNQUENCHABLE THIRST WITH THE PRECIOUS RED NECTAR AND THEN...

CRACK!

"...THIS BITTER, STRANGE TASTE ENVELOPED ME AND ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS...

"... DEBORAH... SWEET DEBORAH. I NEARLY... I WAS SO CLOSE!

" AND WHAT OF MISHKIN? WOULD HE HAVE BEEN NEXT? I HAVE NO CONTROL WHEN THE BLOODLUST IS UPON ME! MY TWO DEAREST FRIENDS...

"...AND I ALMOST KILLED THEM. DISTRAUGHT AND EXHAUSTED, PLAGUED BY CENTURIES OF HORROR AND DEATH, I SIZED UP THE GRIM REALITIES OF MY LOATHSOME AND DISPICABLE LIFE...

"MY VERY PRESENCE PLACED MY TRUSTY ASSOCIATES IN CONSTANT DANGER FROM THE BLOOD RED MOON... I COULD NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF IF THEY CAME TO HARM...

"THERE WAS ONLY ONE LOGICAL THING TO DO. A MAN WHO WAS BOTH HUNTER AND PREY MOVES FASTER ALONE!"

10

FORGIVE ME, MY FRIENDS...

DEAREST FRIENDS,
I HAVE, AFTER MUCH ANGUISHED DELIBERATION, CONCLUDED THAT THIS, TERRIBLE WAR IS MINE **ALONE**, THIS BURDEN MY **OWN** TO BEAR.
I CANNOT, IN GOOD CONSCIENCE, ENDANGER YOUR LIVES ANY FURTHER.
CARRY MY LOVE AND DEVOTION WITHIN YOUR HEARTS TILL NEXT WE MEET AGAIN.
God be with you!
Andrew

...AND GOD BE WITH ME AS WELL...

--I SAID, IS YOUR LOVED ONE STILL IN CALIFORNIA ?

WHAT ? CALIFORNIA ? OH... YES, YES, I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THAT!

AT LEAST I HOPE SHE IS...

'NOTHER BIG SEMI! SOME OF THEM TRUCKERS THINK THEY OWN THE ROAD! OKAY, OKAY, COME ROUND THEN IF YOU'RE IN SUCH AN ALL FIRED HURRY!

HONK! HONK! HONK!

"BUT IT WAS TOO LATE, FOR I SOON SAW THE FAMILIAR UNIFORMS OF MY MARY'S BLOOD RED MOON OPERATIVES, THOSE UNREGENERATE FILTH."

LOOK OUT! THAT'S NOT A TRUCKER!

HONK! HONK! HONK! HONK! HONK! HONK!

WHAT THE--

--DEVIL!

CRASH

HONK

KA-RUNK

"THE CAR WAS DEMOLISHED, BUT WORSE, MATT KITNER, IMPALED BY A TREE LIMB--LIKE A STAKE THROUGH HIS *HEART*--AND HIS FACE, *BURNED* BEYOND RECOGNITION...

"A DESPERATE PLAN FORMED QUICKLY IN MY FRENZIED MIND...

"...BEYOND RECOGNITION!?

"WITH A SPEED BORN OF MY INHUMAN HERITAGE, I CHANGED CLOTHES QUICKLY WITH THE DEAD CHARRED CORPSE...

"AND HOPED MY LITTLE SWITCH SCHEME WOULD *WORK!*

"MY MARY'S PAWNS WERE THROWN OFF TRACK AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING!

"AND ALL SAVE *ONE* OF MY PRECIOUS BLOOD BOTTLES WERE *SMASHED* TO BITS...

"BUT, IT WOULD HAVE TO DO FOR *NOW!*

"TURNING THEN, I, ANDREW BENNETT, THE HUNTER... THE HUNTED...SET UNDEAD EYES ON THE DESOLATE HILLS AHEAD... ON THE UNENDING PATH OF *BLOOD* AND *FEAR* THAT WAS MY DESTINY...

HARPERSVILLE 6 MI.

"MEANWHILE I NEEDED A PLACE TO CLEAN UP AND REST...

"...A DESTINY I MUST FACE *ALONE*...

"...THE NIGHTMARE JOURNEY CONTINUES..."

NEXT: BLOOD TIES!

12

DO YOU DARE ENTER...

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

ALL NEW! 60¢

NO. 302 MAR.

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A NEW "I...VAMPIRE" CHILLER!

DEATH STALKS THE SHADOWS of the CIRCUS OF FEAR!

TONIGHT, YOU BLOODTHIRSTY ANIMALS, THE SAWDUST WILL RUN RED!

"400 YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY, SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET.. WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS *TOO LATE*. *I, ANDREW BENNETT*...

I... VAMPIRE!

"EUDORA, KANSAS. JUNE 28, 5:45 AM. THE DAWN OF THE FIRST OF MANY WRETCHED, DEATH-FILLED DAYS I WOULD SOON LONG TO FORGET...

JONATHAN?... DEAR? WHAT AILS THEM SHEEP?

(SNORT) ...EH?...

BAAA-HHH

IF THAT *BLASTED* MUTT OF WILL PARKER'S IS ON THE PROWL AGAIN, SO HELP ME, I'LL--

NOW, DEAR, MIND YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE.

GETTING SO'S A BODY CAN'T GET A *DECENT NIGHT'S SLEEP* AROUND HERE ANY MORE! NEVER SHOULD'A BOUGHT THEM *BLANKETY-BLANK SHEEP* IN THE FIRST PLACE!

...DEAR GOD...

CHAPTER SEVEN : **BLOOD TIES!**

BRUCE JONES . writer . TOM SUTTON . artist . COSTANZA . letterer . ADRIENNE ROY . colorist . KAREN BERGER . editor . created by J.M. DE MATTEIS

"KELSEY, KANSAS. JUNE 28, 8:32 P.M.

COLD BEER

HARPERSVILLE? JUST OVER THE NEXT HILL, FELLA, ABOUT A MILE-AND-A-QUARTER.

THANK YOU.

SET 'EM UP, PETE!

EE-HAA! SATURDAY NIGHT!

HOW 'BOUT YOU, STRANGER? HAVE A DRINK WITH OL' BILLY BOB?

NO THANK YOU.

S'MATTER? YOU *TOO GOOD* FOR US COWHANDS?

EASY, BILLY...

THANK YOU, I DON'T DRINK. IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...

I THINK HE LOOKS KINDA *SNOOTY* IS WHAT I THINK!

I BELIEVE YOU'RE RIGHT, SHEP. I BELIEVE THIS LONG-HAIRED HIPPIE-TYPE DON'T CARE FOR OUR LITTLE TOWN!

PLEASE LET GO OF MY JACKET...

OH, EXCUSE ME ALL *TO HELL!* WOULDN'T WANT TO WRINKLE THE NICE MATERIAL!

HAW HAW!

IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME NOW...

WHEN BILLY BOB TAYLOR BUYS THE BOTTLE *EVERYBODY* HAS A DRINK, NOW YOU'D *BETTER* DRINK, BOY...

I'M AFRAID I'M ALLERGIC TO WHISKEY.

WHISKEY? WHY THIS AIN'T WHISKEY, BOY! THIS HERE'S *HAIR TONIC!* AIN'T IT, SHEP?

HAR-HAR!!

BILLY, *PLEASE...*

2

IF YOU'RE QUITE THROUGH...

OH I LU-U-UV YOUR NEW HAIR-DO! IT'S JUST *UTTERLY* DIVINE!

COLD BEER

LOOK AT 'IM! HE EVEN WALKS LIKE A SISSY!

GO ON BACK TO NOO YORK, BOY! *HA-HA!*

"HARPERSVILLE CITY LIMITS. JUNE 28, 9:46 P.M.."

HEY, BOY! YOU STILL TRYING TO GET BACK TO NEW YORK?

HIT THE HORN, BILLY!

BEEP BEEP

I DON'T THINK HE HEARD YOU, BILLY!

MAYBE WE BETTER GIVE HIM A LITTLE *NUDGE* BACK TO THE *BIG CITY!*

BEEEEPP

...HEY... THIS GUY'S GOT WEIRD EYES!...

...Y-YEAH...

WHOMP

WHAT TH--

CRIMINY!

NO! NO! YAGGHHHHH!

SKKRUUHNNCHH

HEY!

KAA-RRUMMPHHH

HOLY JUMPIN'--

WHO IN THE BLUE BLAZES IS THAT GUY?

"MY EMOTIONS GOT THE BETTER OF ME AGAIN. I HAD TO GET A HOLD OF MYSELF. IF I HAD PARTICIPATED IN A BRAWL WITH EVERY COUNTRY HOODLUM IN THE STATE, I WOULD HAVE EXPOSED MY TRUE IDENTITY AND ALL MY CAREFUL PLANNING WOULD HAVE COME TO NAUGHT!

"CAREFUL PLANNING... YES, IT HAD BEEN FORMULATING IN MY MIND EVEN BEFORE I KNEW IT MYSELF, THESE STEPS ALONG THE PATH TO WHAT I HAD HOPED WOULD BE A *NEW LIFE!*

DEAREST FRIENDS, I HAVE, AFTER MUCH ANGUISHED DELIBERATION, CONCLUDED THAT THIS, TERRIBLE WAR IS MINE ALONE, THIS BURDEN MY OWN TO BEAR. I CANNOT, IN GOOD CONSCIENCE, ENDANGER YOUR LIVES ANY FURTHER. CARRY MY LOVE AND DEVOTION WITHIN YOUR HEARTS TILL NEXT WE MEET AGAIN. God be with you, Andrew

"IT BEGAN WITH THE NOTE I'D LEFT ON THE MANSION FIREPLACE BIDDING MY TWO DEAREST FRIENDS, DEBORAH DANCER AND DIMITRI MISHKIN, GOOD-BYE...

"THAT HAD BEEN THE INITIAL PHASE OF SEPARATION, DISASSOCIATION... THE NEXT STEP CAME WHEN THE TRUCK MATT KITNER HAD PICKED ME UP IN WAS ASSAULTED BY MARY'S DAYTIME OPERATIVES...

"...AND I HAD CHANGED CLOTHES WITH MATT'S LIMB-PIERCED, CHARRED BODY, HOPEFULLY BURYING ALL MY PAST IN THE CAB OF THE MANGLED VEHICLE..."

4

"I HAD NEW CLOTHING AND I KNEW NOT THEN, BUT A NEW DIRECTION TO FOLLOW... AT LEAST FOR A WHILE.

"ALL MY BLOOD BOTTLES WERE DESTROYED IN THE WRECK... SAVE ONE.

"THAT FOLLOWING DAWN I'D SPENT THE DAYLIGHT HOURS IN THE DARKENED ROOM OF A CHEAP MUSTY HOTEL...

"...AND I TOASTED MY DEAR BELOVED MARY, TO THE DAY I WOULD FINALLY FIND HER...

"...AND END THE BLOOD-SPATTERED CAREER THAT I MYSELF NURTURED IN HER, SO MANY GRISLY EONS AGO...

"BUT EVEN AS MY SOUL WAS TRYING TO BECOME LESS LIKE A VAMPIRE, MY BODY WAS ACTING MORE LIKE ONE. THE SOURCE OF THE BITTER TASTE I HAD FIRST ASSOCIATED WITH LEAK-AGE NOW BECAME OMINOUSLY CLEAR...

...MY BODY WAS STARTING TO REJECT EVERYTHING BUT FRESH BLOOD. I WAS BEGINNING TO BECOME AGAIN THAT WHICH I ALWAYS LOATHED IN MARY... A FEEDER ON FLESH! GOD HELP ME!...

"GOD?... PERHAPS... OR PERHAPS INSTEAD THOSE OF A LESS LOFTY ESTATE, OF EQUALLY GOOD INTENT..."

To my darling Matt... your loving wife, June.

5

"AND SO IT WAS THAT A JOURNEY INITIATED WITH SUCH AUSPICIOUS BEGINNINGS HAD BECOME, IN THE MOMENT OF ITS BIRTH, YET ANOTHER CHAPTER IN A LIFE BESMEARED WITH BLOOD AND DEATH.

"YET WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LIVESTOCK IS NOT CONVENIENT? AND MORE IMPORTANT, HOW MUCH LONGER COULD MY CONSCIENCE PERMIT ME TO GO ON SLAUGHTERING INNOCENT ANIMALS?

"I APPROACHED THE KITNER PLACE... A QUAINT, WELCOMING BOARDING HOUSE, WHERE POOR MRS. KITNER WAS TRYING TO MAKE SOME SENSE OUT OF HER SHATTERED LIFE."

WELCOME TO HARPERSVIL
POP. 3,000

...WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE BLOOD-LUST IS UPON ME THEN?"

YES, I HAVE A ROOM, MR. BENNETT.

YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE THE LOOK OF THE PLACE. I-I LOST MY HUSBAND RECENTLY... IN A TRUCK ACCIDENT.

I'M VERY SORRY.

MR. BENNETT, THIS IS MY SON, TEDDY. MR. BENNETT IS GOING TO BE STAYING WITH US FOR AWHILE, TEDDY...

HELLO, SON...

WELL.

PLEASE FORGIVE HIM, MR. BENNETT, HE USUALLY ISN'T SO RUDE. TEDDY'S BEEN *INCONSOLABLE* SINCE HIS FATHER'S DEATH. THEY SPENT SO MUCH TIME TOGETHER...

YOU'LL BE STAYING IN TEDDY'S ROOM UNTIL I CAN GET A GUEST ROOM CLEAN FOR YOU.

WHAT ABOUT THE BOY?

OH, TEDDY WILL BE COMFORTABLE IN THE SMALL SEWING ROOM DOWN THE HALL FOR A FEW NIGHTS, HE WON'T MIND. BESIDES, WE NEED THE MONEY NOW THAT... MATT...

6

"AND LATER THAT NIGHT..."

HELLO, TED...

'LO...

SAY, I WAS JUST LOOKING THROUGH THIS BOOK ON ASTRONOMY OF YOURS. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND!

I WAS WONDERING, DO YOU SUPPOSE YOU COULD SHOW ME HOW THIS *TELESCOPE* WORKS? IT LOOKS LIKE A *BEAUT!*

Y-YOU LIKE THE STARS?

...EACH OF THE CONSTELLATIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTIONS OF HERCULES AND PEGASUS, HAS ONE FIRST-MAGNITUDE STAR WHICH IS A HELP IN LOCATING THE CONSTELLATION.

FOUR STARS IN PEGASUS FORM THE GREAT SQUARE, WHICH MAKES IDENTIFYING PEGASUS EASY.

GEE! YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT *ASTRONOMY!*

WELL, I'VE, ER, HAD *MANY* YEARS TO STUDY IT, TED...

MY DAD AND I USED TO WATCH THE STARS TOGETHER ON NIGHTS LIKE THIS! HE KNEW *EVERYTHING* ABOUT THEM! HE WAS... THE GREATEST...

I'M SURE HE WAS.

"AND THE NEXT MORNING AT BREAKFAST..."

TEDDY, SLOW DOWN! YOU'LL CHOKE ON THAT CEREAL!

IT'S SATURDAY! I WANNA SEE IF MR. BENNETT WILL PLAY CATCH WITH ME THIS *MORNING!*

I SAW MR. BENNETT LEAVE THIS MORNING BEFORE SUN-UP, TEDDY. I DON'T BELIEVE HE'S BACK YET.

AH, GEE...

WHY DON'T YOU ASK BOBBY GRIMES TO PLAY CATCH WITH YOU?

BOBBY GRIMES IS A CREEP.

GEE, I WONDER WHERE THAT MR. BENNETT WENT?

WHP-WHP-

WOOOOOO

7

CREEAKK

THERE'S A CARNIVAL IN TOWN TONIGHT... ANY TAKERS?

MR. BENNETT! WOW!

LOOK AT HIM! I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM LAUGH LIKE THAT SINCE... SINCE HIS FATHER...

HE'S A WONDERFUL BOY. YOU'RE VERY LUCKY, MRS. KITNER.

PLEASE... I-I'D LIKE IT VERY MUCH IF YOU'D CALL ME JUNE...

WILL... WILL YOU BE STAYING IN OUR TOWN LONG, MR. BENNETT?

ANDREW. AND NO, I'M AFRAID I WON'T. I HAVE AN... APPOINT-MENT BACK EAST.

I SEE.

WELL, PERHARS WE'LL SEE YOU IN HARPERSVILLE AGAIN SOMEDAY...

I HOPE SO...

WILL YOU DO SOME-THING FOR ME, ANDREW?

WHAT?

WILL YOU BUY ME A COTTON CANDY?...

"LATER..."

NOW NOT TOO LATE, YOU TWO-- CHURCH TOMORROW, TEDDY!

WILL YOU JOIN US FOR SERVICE, ANDREW?

C-CHURCH?... I...THAT IS...I'M AFRAID I HAVE AN EARLY APPOINTMENT...

"STILL LATER..."

8

CHOK!

ARRGH

ANDREW? I THOUGHT I HEARD--TEDDY!!

EEEEEEEE!

JUNE? WHA--OH MY GOD!

THIS IS *MY* FAULT! I SWITCHED ROOMS WITH TEDDY SO HE COULD STAY UP AND WATCH THE STARS...

B-BUT (SOB) *WHY*? W-WHO WOULD WANT (SOB) TO MURDER ANYONE *HERE*?

"I WAS DOING IT AGAIN!... DESTROYING THE LIVES OF EVERYONE AROUND ME, ESPECIALLY PEOPLE I CARED ABOUT!

"TWO NIGHTS LATER..."

I'M SORRY, TEDDY... I OWED YOU MORE THAN THIS. FIRST YOUR FATHER AND NOW YOU... BUT DON'T WORRY--

I'LL MAKE CERTAIN THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY SURVIVES. I'M LEAVING HARPERSVILLE TONIGHT.

YOUR MOTHER HAS NOTHING TO FEAR... YOU SEE, IT'S *ME* THEY WANT...

SNAP!

WHO IS IT?

THEODORE 1971 - 19

JUNE!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT'S *YOU* THEY WANT. I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU'RE SOME SORT OF CRI--CRIMINAL!

JUNE, PLEASE, TRY TO UNDERSTAND...

I'M *NOT* A CRIMINAL! SOME PEOPLE-- IF YOU WANT TO CALL THEM THAT-- HAVE BEEN CHASING ME FOR MANY, *MANY* YEARS!

AND THEY WON'T STOP UNTIL THEY GET ME!

OH, GOD-- *GOD!!* WHAT'S THE USE? I'LL *NEVER* TRACK MY MARY DOWN LIKE *THIS!* I WAS A *FOOL* TO THINK I COULD OVER-TAKE HER BLOODY TRAIL! ALL I'VE DONE IS ADD MORE DEATHS, MORE SUFFERING, TO HER LIST.

WHO? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, ANDREW?

AGHH!

ANDREW!!

BLOOD RED MOON OPERATIVES! RUN!

NOT WITHOUT YOU! HURRY! MY CAR IS JUST OVER HERE!

THUNK!

INSIDE, QUICKLY! I'LL DRIVE!

SKREEEEEEE

10

THEY'RE (GASP) GAINING... MUST BE A DOZEN OR MORE OF THEM!

UH-H-H!!

PULL INTO THAT THICKET WHEN WE'RE BELOW THE CREST OF THE HILL... MAYBE WE CAN LOSE THEM!

YOU DID IT! GOOD GIRL! YOU--

JUNE? JUNE??

"THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO... THERE WAS NO PLACE I COULD GO BUT FORWARD. I THOUGHT OF THE DONNE EPIGRAM AS I WINDED MY WAY EASTWARD:

'I RUN TO DEATH AND DEATH MEETS ME FAST AND ALL MY PLEASURES ARE LIKE YESTERDAYS.'

"...THE NIGHTMARE JOURNEY CONTINUES..."

NEXT: "CARNIVAL of SOULS"

I...VAMPIRE! NOW EVERY MONTH IN...

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

ALL NEW! 60¢

NO. 303 APRIL

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

JOE KUBERT '81

NOT ALL THE MONSTERS IN THIS GALLERY OF THE GROTESQUE ARE *MECHANICAL*.. BUT ALL OF THEM ARE *DEADLY!*

WILL *ANDREW BENNETT* BECOME THE NEXT *VICTIM* OF...

"*the* CARNIVAL of SOULS!"

"400 YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY, SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET... WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...Vampire!

"I WALKED QUIETLY THROUGH THE DARK MISSOURI COUNTRYSIDE, KEEPING CLOSE TO THE HIGHWAY BUT NO LONGER HITCH-HIKING, AVOIDING THE HEADLIGHTS OF ONCOMING TRAFFIC BECAUSE EACH DRIVER WAS A POTENTIAL OPERATIVE FOR THE *BLOOD RED MOON*, AND, AS SUCH, MY MORTAL *ENEMY!*"

"BECAUSE OF MY INSISTENCE ON LIVING A LIFE AS NEAR TO HUMAN EXISTENCE AS POSSIBLE, TWO PEOPLE WHOM I HAD GROWN TO CARE ABOUT GREATLY, JUNE KITNER AND HER SON, TED, NOW LAY DEAD IN A SMALL KANSAS TOWN, VICTIMS OF MARY'S DIABOLICAL NETWORK OF THUGS AND VAMPIRES."

"IN BOTH CASES, IT WAS REALLY ME THEY WERE AFTER... I CANNOT LET THAT KIND OF TRAGEDY OCCUR AGAIN... I *CANNOT!*..."

CARNIVAL OF SOULS!

SCRIPT BY *BRUCE JONES* • ART BY *TOM SUTTON* • LETTERS BY *Gaspar* • COLORS BY *ADRIENNE* • EDITOR *KAREN BERGER*

CREATED BY *J.M. DeMATTEIS*

"THE SCREAM KNIFED THROUGH THE EBON SKY, CHILLING EVEN MY LONG-DEAD HEART. I BOLTED FORWARD TOWARD THE SOUND OF IT, FIGHTING BACK THE URGE TO CHANGE TO BAT FORM AND THUS SPEED MY PROGRESS...

"THERE, PARKED IN A CLEARING IN A BEAT-UP CONVERTIBLE, I DISCOVERED THE SOURCE OF THE SCREAM..."

WHAT IS IT? WHAT HAPPENED?

HUH? UH--MY GIRLFRIEND! SHE WAS ATTACKED BY A BAT!

IT JUST SWOOPED DOWN OUT OF NO-WHERE AND MADE FOR HER NECK!

HER NECK? IT DIDN'T--

NO, I BEAT IT OFF BEFORE IT TOUCHED HER! CRAZIEST THING I EVER SAW!

AGH! A CRUCIFIX! NO WONDER IT RETREATED SO READILY!

THE BAT? WHY, THAT WAY, I THINK. SAY, YOU OKAY MISTER?

QUICKLY, WHICH WAY DID IT GO?

"THERE IT WAS! ONE OF MARY'S DEGENERATE OPERATIVES! I DARED NOT LOSE THE FOUL CREATURE, KNOWING IT MIGHT LEAD ME STRAIGHT TO HER!

"AND SO, MOMENTARILY CASTING ASIDE MY RESOLVE...

"I CHASED THE BAT UNTIL I GOT TO A CARNIVAL... THE SAME ONE I VISITED WITH THE KITNERS IN HARPERSVILLE.

"BUT, I HAD LOST THE VERMIN! PERHAPS I WOULD DO BETTER ON FOOT MINGLING WITH THE CROWD!"

2

"NO WONDER MARY'S GOONS WERE ABLE TO FIND ME, WITH AN INNOCUOUS FRONT LIKE THIS!"

BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN HER IN OVER AN HOUR, GEORGE! WHAT IF SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HER?

QUIT FRETTING, AGNES, SHE SAID SHE WAS GOING TO THE FUNHOUSE. I'M SURE SHE'LL BE BACK ANY MINUTE!

"I DIDN'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT...

"I FOUND MY WAY TO THE FUNHOUSE. IT SEEMED INNOCENT ENOUGH... PERHAPS I JUST IMAGINED...

FUN HOUSE

ADMISSION

ENTRANCE

"THAT RED CAR HAD TWO TEENAGED GIRLS IN IT WHEN IT WENT IN... BUT IT WAS EMPTY WHEN IT CAME OUT!

EXIT

"PURCHASING A TICKET, I ALLOWED MYSELF TO ENTER THE MECHANICAL THRILL RIDE... AND, ONCE INSIDE, I KNEW I'D NEVER FIND ANYTHING OUT SEATED IN THIS CAR...

"SO I STOOD BY QUIETLY FOR A TIME AND WAITED...

"THIS YOUNG LADY DIDN'T APPEAR TO BE IN ANY GREAT DIFFICULTY...

"BUT IN THE NEXT MOMENT..."

NO!

NO!

MMPHHH!

3

"AT FIRST IT APPEARED AS THOUGH THE WAX FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER HAD BEEN ABRUPTLY ENDOWED WITH HIDEOUS LIFE..."

MPH!

"...AND THEN... JUST AS I HAD THOUGHT, ONE OF MARY'S UNDEAD PAWNS!..

"AS THE BLAZING, VAMPIRIC EYES BURNED WITH UNTOLD HATRED INTO MY OWN, I LASHED OUT WITH ALL MY STRENGTH AND..."

ARGHH!

WHO ARE YOU, QUICKLY! DON'T BE FRIGHTENED, I'M A FRIEND!

M-MARGO JENNINGS, FROM THE ST. LOUIS READER. I-I'M ON A STORY. W-WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, ANYWAY?

I CAN'T TELL YOU RIGHT NOW, BUT I WILL TELL YOU THIS--THERE'S A FAR BIGGER STORY HERE THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE. WILL YOU MEET ME BACK HERE AT MIDNIGHT? I PROMISE THAT YOU WILL NOT BE HARMED.

YOU SAVED MY LIFE--I TRUST YOU... BUT I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME!

IT'S ANDREW BENNETT. NOW GO, CAREFULLY!

"AS SHE WOUND HER WAY THROUGH THE DARKENED CORRIDORS OF THE FUNHOUSE, I SPOTTED SOMETHING ON THE TRACKS...

"THE FRANKENSTEIN MASK. A PERFECT DISGUISE IN THIS HOUSE OF HORRORS!

"THEN SUDDENLY, FROM A GRATING IN THE FLOORBOARD, CAME A FAMILIAR VOICE..."

...WHY I CALLED YOU ALL HERE...

"MARY!

"I LEANED FORWARD, STRAINING TO HEAR THE WORDS THAT ISSUED FROM THOSE BEAUTIFUL, DEADLY LIPS..."

...BEEN A CHANGE OF PLAN. THE CARNIVAL WILL STAY IN ST. LOUIS ONE MORE NIGHT.

WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PERPETRATE SOMETHING MUCH MORE INSIDIOUS AND PROFITABLE THAN THIS SIMPLE-MINDED WHITE SLAVERY OPERATION WE HAVE NOW. I--

4

"THEN OUT OF THE DARKNESS A HUGE, MOTTLED HAND CLAMPED ONTO MY SHOULDER LIKE A VICE! I WHIRLED AROUND TO FACE--

DERE YA ARE, JOCKO! MARY'S BEEN ASKIN' FOR YA! C'MON!

I BRUNG HIM, MARY. HERE HE IS!

JOCKO, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? PLEASE COME IN. WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU...

"SHE STARED STRAIGHT INTO MY MASKED FACE, WAITING FOR MY RESPONSE. THE WHOLE ROOMFUL OF FRIENDS AND BLACKGUARDS WAS WAITING FOR ME TO REVEAL MY IDENTITY WITH BUT A SINGLE WORD. I OPENED MY MOUTH TO SPEAK. THEN MY MARY SMILED."

"SO CLOSE... SO CLOSE SHE WAS TO ME THAT, I COULD HAVE TOUCHED HER STILL LOVELY-LOOKING SKIN..."

...THE FAMOUS INDUSTRIALIST AND MILLIONAIRE, J. BROWN WOOLEY, WE ARE HOLDING HIS INFANT GRANDDAUGHTER CAPTIVE IN THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, BUT THE POLICE HAVE BLOCKADED THE EXITS AND THERE IS NO WAY TO GET HER OUT.

THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN, JOCKO.

"I SNAPPED TO ATTENTION, PRAYING HER HYPNOTIC GAZE WOULD NOT PENETRATE MY DISGUISE..."

THE FERRIS WHEEL IS SITUATED PARALLEL TO THE IMPERIAL HOTEL. AT EXACTLY 9:45 TOMORROW EVENING, JOCKO, YOU WILL BE ATOP THAT FERRIS WHEEL--READY TO CATCH THE BUNDLE THAT WILL BE THROWN TO YOU FROM THE HOTEL ROOM.

A LIVING BUNDLE--WORTH FIVE MILLION DOLLARS!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, DEAR JOCKO, I KNOW YOU CAN'T SPEAK. HAD YOUR TONGUE CUT OUT FOR IMPUDENCE, AS I RECALL!

WHY DO YOU THINK I CHOSE YOU FOR THIS JOB?

5

"LATER..."

IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT AND I DON'T SEE HIM ANYWHERE. OH, I MUST HAVE BEEN CRAZY TO COME BACK HERE!

THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS! OH, WHY DID I EVER TRUST THAT MAN? I DON'T EVEN *KNOW* HIM! I--

MOVIE LAND

WHA--!

NOOOOO!

LET GO OF ME, YOU-- MRPHH!

SHHHHH. IT'S ME, ANDREW BENNETT!

ANDREW! YOU SCARED ME HALF TO DEATH! WHAT'S GOING ON, ANYWAY!

COME, WE'LL FIND SOME-PLACE WHERE IT'S SAFE TO TALK!

6

"WHILE THE GARISH CARNIVAL BLARED AND WHIRLED AROUND US, WE STOOD IN THE FURTIVE SHADOWS, LIKE THE FUGITIVES WE WERE..."

BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND! IF J. BROWN WOOLEY'S GRANDDAUGHTER HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED, SURELY THE NEWSPAPERS WOULD BE AWARE OF IT BY NOW!

FUN HOUSE

THE CHILD IS BEING HELD BY GUNMEN, AND THE POLICE ARE AFRAID THEY'LL KILL HER IF THE NEWS LEAKS OUT.

THRILLS

FUN O RAMA

WHAT CAN WE DO? HOW CAN WE SAVE HER?

IF YOU CAN FIND OUT IN EXACTLY WHICH ROOM THE CHILD IS BEING HELD, I THINK I CAN GET INTO THE WINDOW AND PERHAPS--

BUT HOW COULD YOU GET INTO THE WINDOW AND PERHAPS--

"I LOOKED INTO THAT BEAUTIFUL, TRUSTING FACE, THOSE LUMINOUS, TRUSTING EYES, AND KNEW I COULD NEVER REVEAL TO HER THE TERRIBLE TRUTH!"

I-I HAVE MY WAYS! YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO TRUST ME! YOU WANTED A GOOD STORY, DIDN'T YOU?

I-IT'S ALL SO CRAZY!

ALL RIGHT! WHATEVER YOU SAY.

GO THEN! WE'LL MEET TOMORROW AT DUSK IN JOCKO'S TRAILER. DON'T FAIL ME!

I'LL DO MY BEST! GOOD LUCK, ANDREW...

7

"DAYLIGHT. THE CARNIVAL THRIVED. CROWDS OF THRILL-SEEKERS COALESCED AND DISSIPATED TO THE CALLIOPATED TRILL OF THE CAROUSEL AND THE SACCHARINE-SWEET SMELL OF COTTON CANDY...

50¢

COTTON CANDY

"THE BARKERS WHIPPED THE CROWDS TO A MONEY-SPENDING FRENZY.

"INSIDE THE FREAK TENT, THE MIDGET, THE MICROCEPHALIC AND THE MAN WITH THE RUBBER SKIN SAT IN BORED, PATIENT SILENCE AS OPEN-MOUTHED MARKS FILED PAST...

FREAK SHOW

AMAZING!

BOO Rds FAT

STRONG MAN

"THEIR GUTTERAL, ASTONISHED GASPS BARELY AUDIBLE OVER THE ANGRY BUZZING OF SUMMER FLIES.

ZERO

"FOR THEM, LIFE WENT ON AS USUAL...

"...BUT NOT FOR ME...

"FOR ME, DAYLIGHT MEANT IMMOBILITY, HELPLESSNESS. IT MEANT HIDING IN DARK, ENCLOSED PLACES AND SLEEPING THE FITFUL SLEEP...

"...OF THE UNDEAD!"

"DUSK BROUGHT RELIEF FROM THAT PRISON OF DARKNESS--BUT NOT FROM MY GREATEST ENEMY, THE GNAWING, INSATIABLE HUNGER STABBING AT MY VITALS..."

WEAK...EXHAUSTED... NEED SUSTENANCE. IT'S BEEN DAYS SINCE I'VE FED...

"I LEANED WEARILY AGAINST THE TENT POLE, STARING UP WITH FEVERED EYES AT THE GIBBOUS FORM OF THE FULL MOON..."

OUT THERE IN THE NIGHT... PEOPLE, NOURISHMENT... *LIFE!*

"YET I'VE SWORN TO EVERYTHING THAT IS HOLY THAT NEVER AGAIN SHALL I PARTAKE OF HUMAN BLOOD... *NEVER!*

"A DARK VISION SWAM BEFORE MY EYES...THE MEMORY OF A CHEAP HOTEL ROOM, A BLINKING NEON SIGN, AND A SINGLE REMAINING BOTTLE OF LIFE'S ELIXIR SALVAGED FROM THE WRECKAGE OF MATT KITNER'S TRUCK..."

SEE HOM #302 "BLOOD TIES"--Karen

"I HAD BROUGHT THE CASE FULL OF BOTTLED BLOOD FROM MY MANSION THE NIGHT I'D MADE THE DECISION TO LEAVE OLD MISHKIN AND DEBORAH DANCER. LITTLE DID I KNOW THEN WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO ME..."

AGH! IT'S BECOME TAINTED!

"OR IS IT *I* THAT HAVE BECOME TAINTED? IN ATTEMPTING TO ACT LESS LIKE A VAMPIRE MENTALLY, HAVE I *BECOME* MORE LIKE ONE PHYSICALLY?

"THE IMAGES FADED FROM MY BRAIN EVEN AS THE STRENGTH FADED FROM MY WEARY LIMBS..."

I *MUST* FIND FOOD! I *MUST*! HOW ELSE CAN I DO BATTLE AGAINST MARY'S HELLISH LEGIONS?

THAT GIRL... WALKING HOME FROM THE CARNIVAL... ALL ALONE!

"THE ALL-CONSUMING FIRES OF HUNGER WELLED WITHIN ME LIKE A LIVING THING, BLOTTING OUT ALL THOUGHTS OF PITY AND MERCY...

CLANK!

WHO'S THERE? WHO IS IT?

CLANK!

PLEASE!... WHOEVER YOU ARE!... I DON'T LIKE GAMES!... I'M VERY FRIGHTENED!...

AGGHHH!

10

EEEEE EEEEEE EEEE

NO!

FILTH! VERMIN! MAY ALL OF MARY'S GHOULISH SERVANTS DIE LIKE THIS!

SKREEEE!

POOR CHILD! SHE WON'T SLEEP THIS NIGHT!... BUT SHE'LL LIVE TO SEE ANOTHER DAY. AND TO THINK THAT IT WAS NEARLY I WHO...

WHAT'S THAT? AUTO ACCIDENT?

THIS UNGUARDED AMBULANCE... IF IT CONTAINS *FRESHLY* BOTTLED BLOOD, PERHAPS THERE'S STILL A CHANCE THAT...

AMBU

"I LOCATED THE EMERGENCY QUARTS QUICKLY AND UNCAPPED THE FIRST ONE... MY LIPS TREMBLED..."

IT'S SWEET! THANK GOD! THEN ALL IS NOT LOST! I CAN STILL SURVIVE ON BOTTLED BLOOD AS LONG AS IT'S ONLY A FEW HOURS OLD!

WHOLE BLOOD

"IN A FEW MINUTES I WAS BACK AT THE CARNIVAL FOR MY RENDEZVOUS WITH MY NEW-FOUND COLLEAGUE...

"...AND SOON SPOTTED HER SILHOUETTE INSIDE JOCKO'S TRAILER."

MARGO! WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT? I--

MARGO?...

NO! NO!

GREETINGS, ANDREW, MY LOVE... I HAVE WAITED CENTURIES FOR THIS MOMENT...TO SEE YOU... TO TOUCH YOU...

M-MARY?

...TO DESTROY YOU, FOREVER!

AAGH!

NEXT: "Welcome to Eternity, Andrew!"

/2

I...VAMPIRE!™

STARRING IN

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY®

ALL NEW!
60¢
NO. 304
MAY

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

THE NIGHT HAS EYES!

"400 YEARS AGO, MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY, SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET... WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...VAMPIRE!™

"THE NIGHT HAS EYES"

BRUCE JONES, WRITER • ERNIE COLÓN, ARTIST • COSTANZA, LETTERER • ADRIENNE, COLORIST • KAREN BERGER, EDITOR

"THE CARNIVAL LIGHTS SPARKLED BRIGHTLY AMONG THE EXCITED LAUGHING CROWDS. GAIETY REIGNED WITH A CACOPHONY OF CALLIOPE MUSIC AND SWIRLING COLORS.

"YET, BENEATH THIS FACADE OF FRIVOLITY LURKED A DREAD HORROR. MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD AND HER VAMPIRIC HENCHMEN, WERE PLOTTING A NEW EXERCISE IN TERROR--THE KIDNAPPING OF A FAMOUS INDUSTRIALISTS GRAND-DAUGHTER.

ARCADE

SPACE WARRIORS

"THROUGH THE AID OF A LOCAL WOMAN REPORTER, I HAD ALMOST SUCCEEDED IN HEADING OFF THE TRAGEDY... UNTIL MARY'S GOONS MURDERED MY YOUNG COLLEAGUE... AND MARY HERSELF HAD TURNED ON ME!"

AT LAST, MY DEAR ANDREW, YOU ARE OUT OF MY WAY FOREVER! YOU AND YOUR PATHETIC, MEDDLING HUMANS!

"A GREAT ICY COLDNESS SWEPT ACROSS MY PROSTRATE FORM. YOU CANNOT TRULY KILL WHAT IS ALREADY DEAD... YET THE WOODEN SHAFT IN MY HEART HAD STOLEN ALL MOBILITY FROM MY LIMBS..."

SETH, BRUTUS, GET HIM OUT OF HERE!

WHAT'LL WE *DO* WITH 'IM, MARY?

CAST HIM IN THE RIVER, BURY HIM IN THE FIELD, HOW SHOULD I KNOW? JUST GET *RID* OF HIM!

CARNIVAL

NO, WAIT!

I HAVE A BETTER IDEA! A FAR MORE POETIC RESTING PLACE FOR OUR HUMANITARIAN FRIEND!

SOMEPLACE WHERE HE CAN GAZE DOWN DAILY AT THE HUMANS HE LOVES SO MUCH!

"IN A VORTEX OF PAIN AND PARALYSIS, I WATCHED THE STARSWEPT NIGHT PASS BY OVERHEAD AS THE TWO VAMPIRE GOONS CARRIED MY BODY FURTIVELY BEHIND THE NOISY CARNIVAL TENTS..."

"THROUGH A RED HAZE OF AGONY I HEARD THE ROAR OF THE ROLLER COASTER NEARBY, SAW A CHILD'S BALLOON ESCAPING INTO THE NIGHT, SMELLED THE COTTON CANDY...

"AND THEN, IN CONFUSION AND BEWILDERMENT, I PERCEIVED AN OPEN TENT FLAP AND THE SIGN MOUNTED ABOVE IT...

EMPLOYEES ONLY KEEP OUT!

"BLACKNESS THEN, AND WITH MY POWERS EVAPORATED, SO WAS MY ABILITY TO SEE IN THE DARK. THEN, ABOVE, A SERIES OF RED LIGHTS... THE SOUND OF LAUGHING SCREAMS FROM SOMEWHERE...

"...A GHASTLY, PAINTED VISAGE... AND I GUESSED AT LAST WHERE THEY HAD TAKEN ME...

"...THE FUNHOUSE!"

OKAY, SETH, SET HIM HERE INSIDE THE COFFIN!

SWEET DREAMS, BENNETT!

YEAH! AND DON'T SCARE NO BABIES, Y'HEAR? *HAW! HAW!*

(HEH-HEH!) LOOKS ALMOST LIFELIKE, DON'T HE?

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"I SLUMPED IMPOTENTLY WITHIN THE CHEAP, CARDBOARD COFFIN, UNABLE TO MOVE, OR THINK RATIONALLY. THEN, FROM FAR, FAR AWAY I HEARD THE SIBILANT WHISPER OF MARY'S EVIL LAUGHTER...

HAHAHaHAAA"

"I STRAINED MY EARS, TRYING TO HEAR HER MALEVOLENT VOICE OVER THE LAUGHTER AND SCREAMS AROUND ME..."

ALL RIGHT--IS EVERYTHING SET FOR THE PICK-UP? BRANT?

IT'S ALL TAKEN CARE OF, MARY!

GOOD! NOW AS I'VE EXPLAINED, J. BROWN WOOLEY IS ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST AND MOST INFLUENTIAL MEN IN THE WORLD.

THE KIDNAPPING OF HIS ONLY GRANDCHILD WILL DO A GREAT DEAL TOWARD THROWING THE INDUSTRIAL WORLD INTO CHAOS. I WANT THIS THING CARRIED OFF WITHOUT A HITCH...

"IT'S 9:05 RIGHT NOW. AT 9:40, YOU, SETH, WILL BE ON THE FERRIS WHEEL PARALLEL TO THE IMPERIAL HOTEL. AT EXACTLY 9:45, BRANT WILL STOP THE WHEEL FROM BELOW WHEN SETH'S CAR IS AT THE EXACT APEX OF THE RIDE. THAT WILL PLACE SETH DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM THE WINDOW IN ROOM 319...

OUR OPERATIVE IN THE ROOM WILL TOSS YOU A BUNDLE, SETH... A BUNDLE CONTAINING WOOLEY'S GRAND-DAUGHTER. I DON'T WANT THE CHILD HARMED. NOT YET, AT LEAST. IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?

YES, MARY.

DO YOU DARE

MONSTER

ONCE YOU'VE SECURED THE CHILD, SETH, WE'LL START THE WHEEL AGAIN AND YOU, BRANT, WILL REPORT TO ME WITH THE CHILD...

I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING! I'VE GOT TO!

"MY MIND WRITHED IN CONVULSIVE AGONY, A PRISONER IN A LEADEN, USELESS HUSK...

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT WILL END LIKE THIS! NOT WHEN I'M SO CLOSE!

WHAT'S THAT? OTHER VOICES...

"... A GROUP OF TEENAGERS ENJOYING THE RIDE..."

LOOK, IT'S THE *SWAMP THING!* LONNIE, I'M *SCARED!*

AWW--IT'S ALL A *FAKE!* THEY'RE NUTHIN' BUT WAX!

FUN HOUSE

L-LOOK AT *THAT* ONE! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING SO *REALISTIC!* H-HIS *EYES...*

BIG DEAL. LET'S FIND A HOT DOG STAND.

"BUT PERHAPS THERE *WAS* A WAY... PERHAPS IT WAS *NOT* TOO LATE..."

COME...COME TO ME...

BECKY? HEY, WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

YOU'RE ROCKING THE BOAT!

COME... COME TO ME *NOW!*

MAYBE SHE'S TIRED OF BEING PAWED, ARNOLD (TEEHEE).

BECKY! HEY!

WHAT THE HECK IS SHE DOIN', ARNIE?

BECKY! GEEZ!

HEY! COME BACK HERE!

I TOLD YOU THAT CHICK WAS A FLAKE...

YOU CAN'T JUST GET OFF IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RIDE!

BECKY? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? BECKY?

THE STAKE... GRASP THE STAKE...

THE *STAKE!* GRASP THE STA--

YOU *ON* SOMETHIN'? C'MON! LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!

NO! *NO!* COME BACK! I COMMAND YOU!

OW!

SLAP!

BECKY!

WHAT THE HECK'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?!

GRASP... THE... STAKE...

BECKY, STOP IT! THAT'S PRIVATE PROPERTY! STOP IT!

YES! THAT'S IT!

NOW PULL! PULL HARD!

LET GO!!

AIEEAG!

D-DID YOU H-HEAR THAT?

HOLY JUMPIN'--

(GASP!) THANK YOU, MY FRIENDS!

IT MUST BE CLOSE TO 9:45! PERHAPS IF I HURRY--!

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...A...A BAT... HE TURNED INTO A BAT...

...PULLED THE STAKE OUT... FELL DOWN... CLIMBED OUT OF THE COFFIN... FLAPPED AWAY...

WHAT HAPPENED?

ARNOLD? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

EXIT ONLY

FUN HOUSE

EXIT

NLY

FUN!! 10 YR! DARE 50¢

FUN

HEY! WAS THAT A BAT?

ONLY RUBBER, HARRIET, ONLY RUBBER...

"I SPED FROM THE FUNHOUSE ENTRANCE FRANTICALLY, HARDLY AWARE OF HOW MUCH BLOOD I HAD LOST... UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE!"

WEAK! C-CAN'T MAINTAIN BALANCE!

AND THE LITTLE MAN HITS THE BULLS-EYE ALL THREE TIMES! HOW ABOUT THAT, FOLKS?

DO I WIN A PRIZE, DADDY?

JETS

WHAT PRIZE WOULD YOU LIKE, SONNY? PURPLE PANDA? NICE FLUFFY GIRAFFE?

I WANT THE BIG BLACK BAT!

THE RUBBER BAT IT IS! HERE Y'ARE, SONNY! CARE TO TRY YER LUCK AGAIN? ONLY FIFTY CENTS! YOU CAN--

ETS

WHAT THE HELL--

WOW! DID YOU SEE THAT?

CAN I WIN ANOTHER ONE, DADDY? CAN I, HUH?

"THE NIGHT SWAM BEFORE MY FEVERED EYES. IF I DIDN'T GET NOURISHMENT SOON..."

THAT VEHICLE AHEAD...

...LOOKS LIKE A RED CROSS TRUCK!

EEEEEEE! A BAT! A GIANT BAT!

RUN! RUN BEFORE IT GETS IN YOUR HAIR!

CRASH

FRESH BLOOD! THANK GOD!

"MOMENTS LATER..."

OKAY, FELLA! WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE'S THE BAT?

BAT? UH... IT FLEW OFF THAT WAY, OFFICER! IF YOU HURRY...

NINE FORTY-THREE! THE FERRIS WHEEL!

"ONCE MORE I TOOK TO THE AIR, THIS TIME SURGING WITH NEW VITALITY..."

THERE IT IS! AND THERE'S SETH AT THE TOP!

EEEEEEEE

HA! GOTCHA, KID! OUT AT FIRST!

NOW WE MAKE A QUICK DELIVERY BELOW...

I DON'T THINK SO, SETH...

YOU!

ONE MOVE, BENNETT, AND THE KID GETS IT IN THE HEAD...

REALLY?

MARY WOULDN'T LIKE THAT VERY MUCH, WOULD SHE, SETH?

...ESPECIALLY AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE SHE'S GONE TO TO SET THIS THING UP...

I'M WARNING YOU--STAY AWAY!

"I WAS STALLING FOR TIME! I KNEW THAT, IN JUST MINUTES, BRANT WOULD START THE WHEEL AGAIN FROM DOWN BELOW..."

10

BETTER GIVE THE CHILD TO ME, SETH... YOU HAVE MY WORD I'LL LET YOU GO FREE...

YOU CAN GO TO HELL, MISTER...

"ABRUPTLY...!"

AGH! THE WHEEL!

"AS THE MECHANISM STARTED, I LEAPT FORWARD SWIFTLY..."

DROP THE GUN, SETH, OR I'LL DROP YOU!

AHRR!

WHOOM!

HOOSHH

BLAM!

"THE BULLET STRUCK AN OIL DRUM AT THE BASE OF THE FERRIS WHEEL AND..."

AIEE!

TAKE OFF, BENNETT, OR I LET THE KID GO!

NO!

"BUT SETH HAD MISJUDGED THE STRENGTH IN HIS SWEAT-SLICK HAND."

GOOD LORD!

LOOK! UP THERE!

OH, GOD!

EEEEEE

SHE'LL BE KILLED!

"AS I WHIRLED BACK TOWARD THE FERRIS WHEEL, I HEARD THE HIGH-PITCHED SCREAMS FROM SETH AND SAW HIS FATE OVERTAKE HIM AS THE METAL CARRIAGE PLUNGED HIM INTO THE LEAPING FLAMES!"

OOMF!

YAAGGHHH

"ONE SMALL BOTTLE OF BLOOD WAS NOT ENOUGH TO SUSTAIN ME FOR LONG... I STUMBLED WEAKLY AGAINST THE TENT ROPE, WATCHING AS SEVERAL POLICE OFFICERS SURROUNDED THE WOOLEY CHILD...

"THE FERRIS WHEEL TURNED INTO A RAGING INFERNO BEFORE MY EYES...

"IN MOMENTS IT STOOD IN CHARRED, SKELETAL RUIN AGAINST THE FULL, MOON... THAT'S WHEN I HEARD THE SECOND SET OF SCREAMS... SCREAMS OF PAIN AND DEATH FROM THE FUNHOUSE...

"MARY AND HER GANG WERE TRAPPED INSIDE...

FUN

"...THEIR CRIES OF HORROR SPIRALING INTO THE NIGHT... FOR A VAMPIRE, CONTACT WITH A CRUCIFIX IS AS DEADLY AS A STAKE IN THE HEART...

"YET, AS I WATCHED, THE SMILE OF TRIUMPH DIED ON MY FACE... A DARK, FERAL FORM LIFTED FROM THE CARNIVAL GROUNDS BEYOND THE FUNHOUSE AND INTO THE NIGHT SKY. I DIDN'T NEED A CLOSER LOOK TO KNOW WHICH VAMPIRE HAD ESCAPED THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS...

"FAR FROM BEING OVER, MY QUEST WAS JUST BEGINNING. I WOULD HAVE TO GIVE CHASE, I KNEW..."

END. 12

NEXT: "BLOOD AND SAND!"

I...Vampire!™

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NO 305 JUNE

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

"I am dying, Egypt, dying!"

MW Kaluta

"SCIENTIST DISCOVERS CANCER VACCINE!" SO THE HEADLINES HAVE READ FOR THE PAST THREE WEEKS, EVER SINCE DR. ALLEN BARR, BRITISH-BORN SCIENTIST, MADE THE MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. FOR THREE WEEKS, NEWSPAPERS ACROSS THE GLOBE HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH ACCOUNTS OF THE MIRACLE DRUG AND ITS ORIGINATOR.

SAVE 1¢ THE 1

18%

ONE WAY

J-8/30

"FOR THREE WEEKS, A WORLD-WIDE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN IN EFFECT TO SEE THAT EVERY HUMAN BEING AND DOMESTIC ANIMAL ON EARTH IS INNOCULATED...

MAN OF WAR

BROADview

WILDLIFE

Jugglers

TV

EXTRA CANCER CURE!!

EXTRA CANCER CURE!!

"BLOOD AND SAND"

"... AND THERE ABOUNDS A FEELING OF HOPE AND OPTIMISM FOR THE HUMAN RACE... THE HUMAN RACE... BUT I DO NOT COUNT MYSELF AMONG ITS MEMBERS. I BELONG TO A DIFFERENT RACE--A FOUL, PARASITIC RACE THAT FEEDS OFF THOSE UNSUSPECTING HUMAN BEINGS.

"EVEN AS THEY REJOICE, I CONTINUE MY PRIVATE AND SOLITARY QUEST: I SEARCH FOR THE LONG-LOST LOVE OF MY YOUTH, THE BEAUTIFUL BUT DEADLY QUEEN OF BLOOD, MARY!

"I, ANDREW BENNETT...

BRUCE JONES WRITER
ERNIE COLÓN GUEST ARTIST
JOHN COSTANZA LETTERER
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KAREN BERGER EDITOR

I...Vampire! 1

"MY SEARCH FOR MARY HAD LED ME TO NEW YORK CITY, WHERE I DISCOVERED A TRAIL OF WHAT SEEMED TO BE A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS--

PANAM

"-- THE BODIES OF DEAD VAMPIRES...

"ONE OF MARY'S OPERATIVES, DEAD -- BUT WITHOUT A MARK ON HIM.

"WAS IT POSSIBLE TO KILL A VAMPIRE WITHOUT DRIVING A STAKE THROUGH ITS HEART? COULD THE UNDEAD TRULY BECOME THE DEAD ONCE MORE?

"OF COURSE, MARY DID NOT LIMIT HERSELF TO UNDEAD OPERATIVES..."

WHAT THE--?

"AND CLEARLY, WHATEVER WAS KILLING HER NIGHTTIME OPERATIVES WAS NOT AFFECTING HER DAYTIME THUGS..."

HEY--HOW COME HE AIN'T WEAK LIKE OUR GUYS?

YOU GRAB HIM FROM BEHIND, MORT, AND I'LL --

OOF!

2

ARRGH! HELP ME, BUCKY!

NO YOU DON'T--

UHHHH!

WHUMP!

NNGHH!

IGNORE IT, MARTHA! IT'S JUST ANOTHER MUGGING!

ALL RIGHT, BUCKY! I WANT TO KNOW WHERE MARY IS, AND WHAT'S BEEN KILLING THE VAMPIRES!

LET ME UP! I DUNNO NUTHIN'!

AAAHH

PERHAPS YOU'D RISK YOUR LIFE FOR YOUR EVIL MARY, BUT WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO RISK YOUR IMMORTAL SOUL? ONE BITE, AND--

NO, WAIT!

I'LL TELL!

I DUNNO WHAT'S BEEN KILLING THE VAMPIRES, HONEST! BUT MARY DOES...

WHERE'S MARY?

SHE'S AT THE AIRPORT, WAITING TO CATCH A PLANE TO EGYPT! SHE SAYS THERE'S SOMETHING THERE THAT WILL HELP--

"SOON AFTER..."

DAMN! TOO LATE!

BUT NOT TOO LATE TO BOOK PASSAGE ON THE NEXT PLANE OUT!

NEWS VEND

25¢

WORLD INNOCULAT AGAINS CANCER

3

"MEANWHILE, UNBEKNOWNST TO ME, MY GOOD FRIENDS DEBORAH DANCER AND DMITRI MISHKIN HAD FORGIVEN ME FOR DESERTING THEM--BUT THEY HAD NOT FORGOTTEN...!"

HE'S ALL *ALONE* OUT THERE, MISHKIN! WE'VE GOT TO *HELP* HIM!

BUT HE DOESN'T *WANT* OUR HELP...

PLEASE, MISHKIN?

WELL, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

WE'LL *FIND* HIM, DON'T WORRY!

YES...IF HE *WANTS* TO BE FOUND...

YES HE *DOES*! DON'T YOU SEE? HE WAS JUST TRYING TO *PROTECT* US! HE DOESN'T WANT THE SAME THING TO HAPPEN TO US THAT HAPPENED TO HIM!

HE *WANTS* TO BE FOUND..., I'M *SURE* OF IT...

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"MY PLANE LANDED IN CAIRO, WHERE I LEARNED THAT MARY HAD PURCHASED DIGGING IMPLEMENTS AND A CAMEL..."

OH, YES, VERY PALE LADY! VERY PRETTY! SHE SPEND MUCH MONEY!

YOU WANT CAMEL TOO, MAYBE! HE VACCINATED ALREADY!

WHICH WAY DID SHE HEAD?

CANCER VACCINE AVAILABLE HERE!

SHE GO INTO DESERT, THAT WAY. I WARN HER ABOUT VIELETS, BUT SHE NOT LISTEN!

WHAT ARE VIELETS?

THEY VERY EVIL TRIBE, DESERT-PEOPLE, TRAVEL ONLY AT NIGHT! VIELETS KILL YOU, SUCK YOUR BLOOD!

VAMPIRES-- DESERT VAMPIRES!

--BUT LADY, SHE PAY ME NO MIND. SAYS SHE MUST GO TO TULAC!

ANCIENT CITY, HALF-COVERED BY SAND. VERY DANGEROUS, MANY SNAKES, MANY EVIL SPIRITS PROTECT IT!

THAT YOUR BAG? VERY FINE LEATHER! YOU WANT SELL? I TRADE YOU--

NO, I DON'T WISH TO SELL, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO BUY A CAMEL FROM YOU, AND A CANTEEN.

"VERY GOOD! I FILL CANTEEN WITH WATER FOR YOU--

"NO! ER--NEVER MIND THE WATER...

"I TRAVELED FOR AN HOUR STRAIGHT INTO THE SANDY WASTES BEFORE ME, UNTIL THERE WAS NOT A LIVING CREATURE TO BE SEEN...

"THE BLOOD I OBTAINED MANY WEEKS AGO FROM A MIDWESTERN LABORATORY WAS STALE AND UNSAVORY, BUT NOURISHING NONETHELESS...

"THE HUNGER THAT HAD BEEN GNAWING AT MY STOMACH SUBSIDED -- ONLY TO BE REPLACED BY THE SELF-HATRED THAT WAS MY LEGACY..."

ONLY A LITTLE LEFT-- PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER IF I SIMPLY *STRANDED* MYSELF HERE AND DIED OF STARVATION...

"...BUT I HAD UNLEASHED A *MONSTER* ON THE WORLD, EVEN IF UNWITTINGLY, AND IT WAS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO SUBDUE IT...OR SHOULD I SAY, *HER!*

"AND THEN I SAW A GROUP OF TENTS ON THE HORIZON--

"SOME DARK INSTINCT TOLD ME NOT TO CALL OUT...THEN I *SAW* THEM...

"COULD THIS BE THE CAMP OF THE DESERT VAMPIRES -- THE VIELETS?

"COULD THIS BE WHERE I WOULD FIND MARY?...

KELIVI PLIE GOSOMIR!

GOSOMIR HI VI !!

"THERE WAS A *SMELL* IN THE AIR, FAMILIAR TO ME BUT ONE THAT FRIGHTENED MY CAMEL BADLY--

UHHHK

THEIR BLACK EYES BURNED FROM THE COWLED, PALE FACES, EACH AN EXPRESSION OF BESTIAL BLOOD-LUST; THEIR LONG WHITE FANGS GLISTENED AGAINST THE CRIMSON-SMEARED MOUTHS..."

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"THEN, UNBELIEVABLY..

"WITHIN SECONDS THEY LAY ABOUT ME AS LIFELESS AS THE SAND ITSELF, AS IF A BLACK AND FATAL PLAGUE HAD SWEPT THROUGH ON A MYSTERIOUS NIGHT WIND.

"A PLAGUE THAT KILLED VAMPIRES, YET HAD NOT KILLED ME!

"JUST BEYOND THE CAMP I COULD SEE THE LONE TRACKS OF A SINGLE CAMEL LEADING INTO THE EBON DESERT WASTES...

MARY.

"I RODE ENDLESSLY, MY EYES SCANNING THE HORIZON, SEARCHING FOR A TRACE, A CLUE...

"THE MOON WAS FULL AND HIGH IN THE NIGHT SKY WHEN I SPOTTED HER MOTIONLESS BODY LYING ON THE COOL WHITE SAND...

"BUT SHE WAS NOT DEAD, LIKE THE OTHERS--SIMPLY STILL. A FLOOD OF PAINFUL MEMORIES SWEPT OVER ME AT THE SOUND OF HER VOICE, SOFT AND WEAK AND DEVOID OF RANCOR..."

ANDREW! OH, ANDREW, MY DARLING!...

MARY! WHAT'S --WHAT'S *HAPPENED* TO YOU?

"IT WAS AS IF HER LACK OF STRENGTH HAD DRAINED HER OF THE *EVIL* WHICH POSSESSED HER FOR SO MANY CENTURIES, AND SHE HAD ONCE MORE BECOME THE SIMPLE, SWEET MARY WHOM I HAD LOVED SO DEEPLY!"

HERE... DRINK THIS...

ANDREW! (CHOKE!) ...OH THANK YOU, ANDREW!...(GULP!)

IT'S THE *SERUM*, ANDREW! THE *CANCER* SERUM! IT CHANGES THE BLOOD SO THAT IT'S *POISONOUS* TO US!

I TOLD THOSE FOOLS NOT TO KILL THAT CAMEL FOR ITS *BLOOD*, I TOLD THEM IT WAS *POISON*, BUT THEY WOULDN'T *LISTEN!*

OH, ANDREW, I DON'T WANT TO DIE! (SOB!)

PERHAPS IT'S BETTER THIS WAY-- AT LEAST WE SHALL DIE *TOGETHER!*

NO! WE *WON'T* DIE! I KNOW OF A WAY THAT WE CAN *LIVE* TOGETHER--

THE WAY WE WERE *BEFORE* WE WERE VAMPIRES!

BUT-- BUT *HOW?*

"IT WAS THEN THAT MARY TOLD ME THE FANTASTIC STORY OF THE RINGS OF KUR-ALET, THE EGYPTIAN KING, AND HOW HE USED THEM TO ESCAPE THROUGH TIME TO BE WITH HIS LOVELY SLAVE GIRL, NEKI...

"...ONLY TO HAVE HIS PLAN BACKFIRE WHEN HIS WIFE DISCOVERED THE RING AND USED IT TO FOLLOW HIM THROUGH TIME!" *

*SEE PREVIOUS STORY -- KAREN

YOU SEE, I HAVE A MAP OF THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE TOMB OF KUR-ALET!

IF WE COULD GET THE *RINGS*, WE COULD USE THEM TO RETURN TO OUR OWN TIME, A TIME WHEN WE WERE STILL *HUMAN!*

PLEASE, ANDREW! IF YOU EVER *LOVED* ME...

"AND, LOOKING INTO THOSE DEEP, PLEADING EYES, I KNEW I COULD NOT REFUSE HER..."

"WE TRAVELED TOWARD THE CITY OF TULAC UNTIL JUST BEFORE DAYBREAK, WHEN WE WERE FORCED BY THE SUN'S CRUEL RAYS INTO HIDING..."

REST, MARY, UNTIL SUNSET. YOU'LL NEED ALL YOUR STRENGTH TO COMPLETE THIS JOURNEY.

"AND WITH THE SETTING OF THE SUN..."

WAKE, MARY! IT'S TIME TO *RESUME* OUR--

MARY! WHERE *ARE* YOU?

"DISAPPEARED! I HURRIED OUT INTO THE EVENING AIR; PERHAPS IN A STATE OF DELIRIUM SHE HAD WANDERED AWAY FROM THE TENT...

"THEN I SAW HER..."

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"THEY WERE SO CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER THEY WERE PRACTICALLY TOUCHING: MARY KNEELING IN THE SAND, STARING INTENTLY, AND THE COBRA, COILED, ITS VICIOUS FANGS GLISTENING WITH VENOM..."

MARY! WATCH OUT!

--"BUT MARY HAD FANGS OF HER OWN!"

MY GOD, MARY, WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE*?

ANDREW, IT'S BLOOD, *NOURISH-MENT!* PURE, DRINKABLE, UNTAINTED *BLOOD!*

TASTE IT! *TASTE* IT!

"FOR A MOMENT A SPARK OF *BLOODLUST* LIT HER EYES SADISTICALLY...

"THEN IT WAS *GONE*..."

OH, ANDREW, *FORGIVE* ME! I DON'T KNOW WHAT *CAME OVER* ME... I-I COULDN'T *HELP* MYSELF!

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"WE TRAVELED ON TOWARD TULAC. I KNEW THEN ONLY THE RINGS MIGHT SAVE US.

"IN THE MEANTIME, TWO OTHER TRAVELERS HAD FOLLOWED MY FOOTSTEPS NEARLY FOUR THOUSAND MILES..."

MY GOD, MISHKIN, LOOK AT THEM! ALL DEAD, JUST LIKE THE OTHERS

THE VAMPIRES ARE DYING! IT'S ALL OVER THE WORLD! WHAT CAN BE KILLING THEM?

I ONLY PRAY THAT WHATEVER KILLED THEM HAS NOT KILLED BENNETT AS WELL...

"MARY AND I REACHED THE SITE OF THE LOST CITY OF TULAC, TWO DAYS LATER, TOTALLY UNAWARE THAT MY WOULD-BE SAVIORS FOLLOWED ONLY A FEW MILES BEHIND..."

ACCORDING TO THE MAP, THE ENTRANCE TO THE TOMB SHOULD BE RIGHT ABOUT HERE...

HERE, HERE--I FOUND IT!

"AND AS I LOWERED MARY INTO THE CHAMBER..."

OH, ANDREW, THIS IS IT! THE TOMB OF KUR-ALET!

HURRY, DARLING!

AND HERE ARE THE RINGS!

10

WHAT DOES THAT *INSCRIPTION* SAY?

IT SAYS: *FOREVER AFTER, IT IS DECREED THAT KING KURA-LET OF EGYPT IS DOOMED TO PROTECT THE RINGS OF ANUBIS...*

LOOK, IT *FITS!*

PELOGRI... ETEA... *TELEN!*

MARY, WAIT FOR *ME!*

"*RIPPING THE RING FROM KURA-LET'S NECK, I WAS PREPARING TO UTTER THE MAGICAL CHANT WHEN--*"

ARRRGGGGHHH

"DRIVEN BY THE ANCIENT CURSE OF THE RINGS, THE PETRIFIED, MINDLESS BODY LAUNCHED ITSELF AT ME!

"I CLAWED AND TORE AT IT, MY FINGERS COMING AWAY WITH BITS OF TATTERED BANDAGE AND CLUMPS OF LONG-DEAD FLESH.

"IN DESPERATION, I REACHED FOR A ROCK BEHIND ME, AND--

"-- THE TEETERING, MINDLESS MONSTROSITY SHATTERED INTO A MILLION FRAGMENTS!

WHAK!

PELOGRI... ETEA... TELEN!

"HURRIEDLY I CLOSED MY EYES AND UTTERED THE CHANT..."

"...BARELY AWARE OF THE FAMILIAR VOICE IN THE DISTANCE THAT CALLED MY NAME..."

ANDREW! ARE YOU DOWN THERE? IT'S ME--DEBORAH!

ANDREW!

MISHKIN, HE VANISHED... RIGHT BEFORE OUR EYES!

"AND AS DECREED, MY RING FOLLOWED MARY'S... INTO THE PAST..."

MARY? IS THAT YOU?

MARY?

OH, NO!

"AND FROM THE DISTANCE CAME THE DERANGED SOUND OF MARY'S LAUGHTER..."

NEXT: "A RIP IN TIME"

I...VAMPIRE!™

STARRING IN

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY®

ALL NEW! 80¢ NO 306 JULY

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

WATCH OUT, LONDON! JACK THE RIPPER IS ON THE LOOSE AGAIN!

JOE KUBERT

C-899

"FOR CENTURIES I LED A LIFE FULL OF THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF FATE. BUT NEVER HAD I ENCOUNTERED A MORE CONVOLUTED AND ILLOGICAL PATH AS THE ONE I HAD TAKEN IN MY PURSUIT OF MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD, MY ONCE-LOVE, MY NEMESIS.

"MARY, WHO SOMEWHERE LAUGHED TAUNTINGLY AT ME, KNOWING SHE HAD ESCAPED ME AGAIN, THIS TIME NOT BY WICKEDNESS OR TREACHERY, BUT BY APPEALING TO THE LOVE THAT I STILL HELD IN MY HEART FOR THE WOMAN SHE ONCE WAS!

"THE LAUGHTER ECHOED THROUGH THE FOG-BOUND STREETS AS I BENT HELPLESSLY OVER THE WRETCHED DEAD WOMAN LYING AT MY FEET. ON THE COBBLE-STONE STREET BESIDE HER, THE GLINT OF SOMETHING SHARP AND METALLIC CAUGHT MY GAZE. A SCALPEL!

"ONCE MORE I WAS THE DUPE OF MARY'S CUNNING! I...ANDREW BENNETT..."

BLACK SWAN

J-8164

E.: Vampire!

"A RIP IN TIME"

1

BRUCE JONES . writer
TOM SUTTON . artist
JOHN COSTANZA . letterer
ADRIENNE ROY . colorist
KAREN BERGER . editor
created by: J.M. DeMATTEIS

BLIMEY, 'E'S GONE AN' KILLED ANOTHER ONE!

'ERE, DON'T LET 'IM GET AWAY!

GET 'IM! GET THE BLIGHTER!

'E WON'T GET AWAY *THIS* TIME!

LOOK AT THAT, WILL YOU! 'E'S GONE AN' *DISAPPEARED* AGAIN!

IF YOU ASK *ME*, IT'S NOTHING MORE NOR LESS THAN WITCHCRAFT!

YOU SAID IT, DEARIE!

"WITCHCRAFT? NO--SOMETHING MORE INSIDIOUS AND EVIL THAN SIMPLE WITCHCRAFT!"

"THREE WEEKS AGO A BANNER HEADLINE CRIED OUT THE NEWS OF THE CENTURY...

London Times

80 YEAR OLD SCIENTIST DISCOVERS CANCER VACCINE!

BRITISH BORN DR. ALLEN BARR SAVES MANKIND!

"LITTLE DID I REALIZE THE IMPORT THIS NEWS WOULD CARRY--UNTIL I BEGAN TO DISCOVER THE BODIES...OF DEAD VAMPIRES!

"BUT HOW WAS IT POSSIBLE TO KILL WHAT WAS ALREADY DEAD?

"I FOLLOWED THE TRAIL OF PARASITES TO THE BURNING DESERT OF EGYPT, WHERE MARY, FEEBLE FROM HUNGER, TOLD ME THE TRUTH ABOUT HER DYING FOLLOWERS..."

IT'S THE CANCER SERUM, ANDREW! IT CHANGES THE BLOOD SO THAT IT'S POISONOUS TO US!

"BUT SHE HAD A PLAN, A PLAN TO ENABLE US TO RETURN TO OUR FORMER LIVES, USING THE RINGS OF KUR-ALET TO TRAVEL IN TIME..."

THEN WE CAN BE TOGETHER FOREVER, MY LOVE, JUST THE WAY WE WERE!

"SHE PERSUADED ME TO VIOLATE THE TOMB OF KUR-ALET AND STEAL THE RINGS... AND SECONDS LATER, SHE WAS GONE!"

PELOGRI... ETEA... TELEN!

NO, MARY, WAIT!

"SHE DISAPPEARED IN A FLASH OF LIGHT, HER THOUGHTS DETERMINING WHERE THE RING WOULD CARRY HER. MEANWHILE, THE CURSE OF KUR-ALET LOOMED BEHIND ME..."

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"THE MUMMY OF KUR-ALET WAS DOOMED TO PROTECT THE RINGS FOR AN ETERNITY--AN ETERNITY WHICH ENDED ABRUPTLY FOR THIS MINDLESS MONSTROSITY!

"I CLOSED MY EYES AND UTTERED THE CHANT, KNOWING THAT MY RING WOULD FOLLOW MARY'S INTO THE PAST, AS IT WAS PREORDAINED..."

PELOGRI...ETEA... TELEN!

"...AND FOUND MYSELF IN A DARK, FOGGY LONDON STREET WITH THE SOUND OF MARY'S DERANGED LAUGHTER ASSAULTING MY EARS!"

MARY?

OH, NO!

"I FLEW OVER UN-FAMILIAR HOUSETOPS IN A STRANGE TIME, BUT I KNEW THAT WITHOUT THE RICH, WARM NOURISHMENT OF FRESH BLOOD I WOULD BE UNABLE TO RETAIN THIS FLIGHT MUCH LONGER..."

ARRGH! I'M FALLING...CAN'T FLY ANYMORE...

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AHEM!

W-WHERE AM I? WHO ARE YOU?

ONE QUESTION AT A TIME, MY FRIEND! YOU ARE IN THE WHITECHAPEL SECTION OF LONDON. I AM DR. JONATHAN KELSEY AND THIS IS MY ASSISTANT, MISS PENNY BOWER.

'OW DO, SIR!

(CHUCKLE) I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF GIVING YOU A BLOOD TRANSFUSION, SINCE I DOUBTED THAT YOU WOULD HAVE LIVED WITHOUT ONE.

THANK YOU, DR. KELSEY.

MY NAME IS ANDREW BENNETT, AND I'M VERY GRATEFUL TO YOU.

HOW D'YOU DO! ACTUALLY, WE'RE ALREADY BLOOD BROTHERS, SO TO SPEAK! (CHUCKLE)

PENNY WILL FIND YOU A ROOM UP-STAIRS. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO STAY AS LONG AS YOU WISH.

THANK YOU.

PERHAPS WHEN YOU FEEL BETTER, YOU'D LIKE TO ASSIST ME WITH MY PRACTICE.

I'D BE DELIGHTED!

THIS WAY, MR. BENNETT...

'E'S SUCH A WONDERFUL MAN, IS DR. KELSEY. WHY, 'E'D 'ELP ANYBODY IN NEED!

'E RESCUED ME FROM A LIFE O' SIN, AND 'E WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME FOR ME SISTER, IF SHE'D GIVEN 'IM 'ALF A CHANCE!

HE SEEMS VERY KIND...

YOU LOVE HIM, DON'T YOU?

'COR, SIR! ANYONE WOULD...

"THE THICK, VICTORIAN DRAPES WERE IDEAL FOR KEEPING OUT THE DESTRUCTIVE RAYS OF THE SUN, AND I FOUND MYSELF ABLE TO MOVE AROUND THE HUGE HOUSE AT MY LEISURE..."

OW! THAT 'URTS, DOC!

OH, MR. BENNETT, I SEE THAT YOU'RE UP! AND LOOKING VERY WELL, I MIGHT ADD!

CROWLEY, MEET MY NEW ASSISTANT, MR. ANDREW BENNETT.

MORNIN', GOV'NER!

I AM ABOUT TO BLEED MR. CROWLEY HERE AND I NEED YOUR HELP.

BLIMEY, DOC, DO YE 'AVE TO BLEED ME? I DON'T FEEL ALL THAT ROTTEN!

JUST A PRE-CAUTIONARY MEASURE. NOW THIS WON'T HURT A BIT!

"THE BLOOD DRIPPED IN SPARKLING RUBY DROPLETS AND I FELT THE HEAT RISING IN MY VEINS AT THE SIGHT OF IT..."

OWWWW!!

"... THE CRIMSON FLOOD AROUSED IN ME A LUST SO POWERFUL, SO IRRESISTIBLE, THAT THE SMELL OF IT MADE ME TREMBLE UNCONTROLLABLY...

"I LEANED FORWARD OVER THE UNSUSPECTING MR. CROWLEY, LIPS PULLED BACK TO REVEAL SHARP, VICIOUS FANGS, CLOSER, CLOSER... THEN--"

BENNETT? BENNETT!

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YES SIR?

QUITE ALL RIGHT, BENNETT, BOY?

COULD YOU DISPOSE OF THIS BLOOD FOR ME PLEASE? I'LL ATTEND TO MR. CROWLEY.

YES, SIR...

"FRESH HUMAN BLOOD, WITHOUT THE COST OF HUMAN LIFE! I COULD BARELY CONTAIN MY GRATITUDE... OR MY THIRST!"

YA SEE, DOC, IT DIDN'T HELP ME RASH A BIT!

"BUT SUCH LACK OF CAUTION CAN BE DANGEROUS..."

WHA--? OH, MR. BENNETT, YOU STARTLED ME! I DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE IN THE SHADOWS!

I WAS JUST TAKING DR. KELSEY 'IS KIPPERS AND 'IS MORNING PAPER...

I'LL DO IT, PENNY! IF YOU COULD JUST GET RID OF THIS PAN...

WHY THANK YE, MR. BENNETT! YE'RE EVER SO KIND...

DR. KELSEY? DR. KELSEY, YOUR BREAKFAST IS READY...

WHAT'S THIS?

KNOCK !!!

OH MY GOD!

LONDON TIMES
OCTOBER 11, 1888
RIPPER STRIKES AGAIN!

SOMETHING INTERESTING IN THE PAPER TODAY? NO DOUBT MORE ABOUT THAT RIPPER FELLOW...

DR. KELSEY, I-I DIDN'T SEE YOU...

I WAS DOWNSTAIRS WORKING IN MY LABORATORY.

HM-M, THIS FELLOW LOOKS A BIT LIKE YOU, DOESN'T HE?

DR. KELSEY, I--

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DON'T WORRY, I KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT THE RIPPER...

NOW ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS PROVE IT TO SCOTLAND YARD...

"'PROVE IT TO SCOTLAND YARD! BUT HOW DID I PROVE THAT IT WAS NOT JACK THE RIPPER KILLING THESE WOMEN, BUT MY MARY POSING AS THE RUTHLESS KILLER!

"BUT WHY WOULD SHE WANT TO RETURN TO 1888?

"THEN I REMEMBERED THE ARTICLE I READ ABOUT ALLEN BARR, INVENTOR OF THE CANCER SERUM...

"...THE EMINENT DR. BARR IS THE SON OF A SOHO MOTHER WHO, IN HER YOUNGER DAYS, NARROWLY ESCAPED BECOMING THE VICTIM OF JACK THE RIPPER..."

"THAT WAS IT! MARY INTENDED TO MAKE SURE THAT DR. BARR'S MOTHER DID NOT ESCAPE JACK THE RIPPER...

"...THUS PREVENTING BOTH HIS BIRTH AND THE INVENTION OF THE VAMPIRE-KILLING SERUM!

"I MUST FIND MARY, BUT HOW?

"I ENLISTED THE AID OF PENNY BOWER, WHO HAD ONCE WORKED THE VERY STREETS THAT MARY NOW STALKED..."

PER'APS ME FRIEND CHARLIE KNOWS A GIRL NAMED BARR. 'E'S A BARTENDER DOWN AT THE COCK 'N' BULL PUB AN' 'E KNOWS ALL THE GIRLS!

"IT WAS WELL PAST DUSK WHEN WE REACHED THE COCK AND BULL..."

SORRY, FRIEND, I DON'T KNOW NO ONE NAMED BARR.

SAY, PENNY, 'AVE YOU TALKED TO LACEY TONIGHT?

ME SISTER? NO, I 'AVEN'T WHY'D YOU ASK?

FRIEND OF 'ERS WAS IN 'ERE LOOKIN' FOR 'ER EARLIER, RED-HAIRED WOMAN.

MARY!

I SENT 'ER OVER TO TAYLOR AND 'OLMES, THAT'S WHERE LACEY 'ANGS OUT NOWDAYS.

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WHO'D YOU THINK--

'EY! WHERE WE GOING?

TO TAYLOR AND HOLMES! YOUR SISTER MAY BE IN GRAVE DANGER!

"WE FLEW RAPIDLY THROUGH THE MISTY STREETS...

"...SEARCHING IN THE FOG FOR THE STREET CORNER WHERE LACEY BOWER MADE HER LIVING...

"...AND POSSIBLY, MET HER DEATH...

"UNTIL..."

SEE? THERE SHE IS, ALL DONE UP AND RARIN' TO GO!

POOR DR. KELSEY, HE TRIED SO HARD TO MAKE 'ER CHANGE 'ER WAYS, BUT SHE WOULDN'T 'AVE NONE OF IT.

'OW'S ABOUT IT, DUCKS? CARE FOR A LITTLE FUN?

LACEY, REALLY!

'EY! YOU'RE NOT LACEY!

WHERE'S LACEY? WHAT 'AVE YOU DONE WITH 'ER, YOU--

EEEEEEEEEE

PENNY? PENNY!

YOU SEE, ANDREW MY LOVE, I ALWAYS GET MY WAY...

I HAVE SUCCEEDED WHERE YOU HAVE FAILED! I KNEW BOWER WAS THE MAIDEN NAME OF DR. BARR'S MOTHER EVEN *BEFORE* WE FOUND THE RINGS!

DID YOU REALLY THINK I WANTED YOU AGAIN?

I JUST *USED* YOU TO REVERSE THE EVENTS OF THE FUTURE!

YOU CANNOT STOP ME, *YOU* WITH YOUR *SENTIMENTAL LOVE* OF MANKIND!

IT IS *I* WHO AM STRONGER! STAND ASIDE!

NOW TO RETURN TO THE PRESENT--

A PRESENT *WITHOUT* ALLEN BARR AND HIS DEADLY CANCER SERUM!

PELOGRI... ETEA... TELE--

NOT SO FAST! YOU SHAN'T ESCAPE *THIS* EASILY!

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I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING YOU FOR SOME TIME, YOU WITH YOUR POOR IMITATIONS OF THE RIPPER MURDERS!

DR. KELSEY!

MY THANKS TO YOU, BENNETT, FOR TRACKING HER DOWN FOR ME! AND A PRETTY LITTLE BIT SHE IS, TOO!

DR. KELSEY, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.

OF COURSE I UNDERSTAND! SHE'S A PROSTITUTE, JUST LIKE THE REST, LIKE LACEY BOWER, AND PENNY BOWER TOO, BEFORE I TOOK HER IN--

PENNY BOWER! (CHOKE!) YOU MEAN--THERE'S ANOTHER BOWER? THAT I MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN THE WRONG ONE?

(CHUCKLE) I DON'T KNOW WHAT *THAT* MEANS, BUT I *DO* KNOW THAT YOU SHALL PAY FOR YOUR HEINOUS CRIMES...

YOU SEE, BENNETT, I *KNEW* YOU WERE NOT JACK THE RIPPER... BECAUSE *I* AM...

TELEN!

WHAT TH--!

OOOFF!

SORRY, BENNETT, BUT I CAN'T HAVE ANY WITNESSES...

"THUS THE MOST INFAMOUS CRIMINAL OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY DIED UNDISCOVERED, A VICTIM OF HIS OWN BLADE..."

TWEEEEET TWEEE

BLOODY 'ELL, WE'RE TOO LATE AGAIN!

THIS ONE'S DEAD!

SO'S THIS ONE. STRIKE ME DEAD IF IT AIN'T DR. KELSEY!

HE MUST HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DEFEND THAT POOR YOUNG WOMAN FROM THE RIPPER!

LOOK, THERE'S DR. KELSEY'S ASSISTANT! I THINK SHE'S STILL ALIVE! LIFT UP HER HEAD, JOE!

(GROAN!)

WH-WHERE AM I?

YOU'RE SAFE AND SECURE, IS WHERE! AND LUCKY!

WHY, YOU WERE ALMOST A VICTIM OF JACK THE RIPPER!

WH-WHO ARE Y-YOU?

OFFICER JOSEPH ALLEN BARR AT YOUR SERVICE, MISS!

END

NEXT: "LOVERS LIVING LOVERS DEAD" 12

I...Vampire!™

STARRING IN

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY®

ALL NEW! 60¢

NO. 307 AUG.

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THE CORPSE THAT CAME IN WITH THE TIDE!

JOE KUBERT

"PAINFULLY I OPENED MY EYES. ABOVE ME THE SKY BOILED BLACK AND PREGNANT WITH RAIN; NOT A GLIMMER OF BURNING SUNLIGHT PASSED THROUGH ITS DARK CLOUD COVER. I FOUND MYSELF STANDING ON A WIND-SWEPT CLIFF OVERLOOKING A ROILING SEA, NOT KNOWING THE DAY OR THE YEAR OR EVEN WHICH OCEAN RAGED BELOW ME..."

"FOR THE RING HAD BROUGHT ME HERE AGAINST MY WILL--THE MAGIC RING OF KUR-ALET. MARY, MY FORMER LOVE, MY NEMESIS, HAD ONCE AGAIN USED HER RING TO TRANSPORT HERSELF THROUGH TIME, AND MY RING, AS HAD BEEN ORDAINED, HAD FOLLOWED HERS..."

"THERE WAS NO CLUE TO TIME HERE, AND NO SIGN OF MARY. WHATEVER EVIL SHE INTENDED TO INFLICT REMAINED A MYSTERY TO ME--A MYSTERY I WAS FATED TO TRY TO SOLVE...

"I, ANDREW BENNETT...

J-8229

I...Vampire!™

LOVERS LIVING, LOVERS DEAD

BRUCE JONES . writer
TOM SUTTON . artist
JOHN COSTANZA . letterer
ADRIENNE ROY . colorist
KAREN BERGER . editor
created by J.M. DeMATTEIS

"FOR 400 YEARS MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD, HAS SOUGHT DOMINATION OF THE WORLD AIDED BY HER LEAGUE OF UNDEAD FOLLOWERS...

"THROUGH THE YEARS I FOLLOWED HER EXPLOITS, SEEKING TO PREVENT THE DESTRUCTION THAT SHE LEFT IN HER WAKE, NARROWLY MISSING HER AT EVERY TURN..."

YOU'LL NEVER STOP ME, ANDREW! YOUR BITE HAS MADE ME INDOMITABLE! HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!!

"THEN CAME THE MOST PERILOUS JOURNEY OF ALL... A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME ITSELF!

"IT BEGAN WITH A HEADLINE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD..."

DAILY TIMES

CANCER SERUM DISCOVERED

"CANCER SERUM--A BOON FOR MANKIND! BUT A CURSE FOR THE UNDEAD!

ANOTHER DEAD VAMPIRE! BUT HOW CAN THAT BE?

"THE CANCER SERUM CONTAINED SILVER NITRITE--POISONOUS TO A VAMPIRE'S SYSTEM... A FACT MARY SOON DISCOVERED..."

WE'RE DOOMED IF WE STAY HERE, ANDREW! BUT I KNOW THE ANSWER!

"SHE TOLD ME OF THE TWIN RINGS OF KUR-ALET--MAGICAL RINGS WHICH ENABLED THE WEARERS TO TRAVEL THROUGH TIME..."

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"MARY CONVINCED ME THAT IF WE WERE TO STEAL THESE RINGS, WE COULD USE THEM TO TRAVEL BACK TO OUR PAST LIVES BEFORE THIS CURSE OF BLOOD FELL UPON US. BUT WHEN WE ARRIVED AT THE TOMB..."

PELOGRI... ETEA... TELEN!

NO, MARY, WAIT FOR ME!

"SHE CHOSE 19TH CENTURY LONDON, HOPING TO PREVENT THE BIRTH OF THE SCIENTIST WHO INVENTED THE CANCER SERUM, AND MY RING FOLLOWED HERS.

"BUT SHE HAD MADE PROVISIONS FOR ME EVEN BEFORE I ARRIVED..."

LOOK! IT'S 'IM! IT'S JACK THE RIPPER!

"HOWEVER SHE HADN'T COUNTED ON INTERFERENCE FROM THE REAL JACK THE RIPPER.

"HER PLAN THWARTED, SHE USED THE RING ONCE MORE TO MAKE GOOD HER ESCAPE...

"...LEAVING ME TO FEND FOR MYSELF. IT WAS A FIGHT TO THE DEATH...

"...THE DEATH OF JACK THE RIPPER!"

"BUT, AS IT WAS PREORDAINED, MY RING FOLLOWED MARY'S--

"--AND I FOUND MYSELF DIZZY AND DISORIENTED, WONDERING WHY MARY HAD WISHED HERSELF HERE, OF ALL PLACES..."

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"...OR PERHAPS THERE WAS A REASON FOR ME TO BE HERE, AFTER ALL..."

HELP! (GLUB!) HEEELLP!!

MOMMY?...

HEY! YOU'RE NOT MOMMY!

I SHOULD HOPE NOT. MY NAME IS ANDREW BENNETT.

I'M DEEDEE! I LIVE UP THERE!

WELL, DEEDEE, I'M SURE YOUR PARENTS WILL BE VERY HAPPY TO HAVE YOU BACK!

"MEANWHILE, IN ANOTHER TIME, MY FRIEND DEBORAH DANCER WAS HAVING A NIGHTMARE..."

ANDREW! ANDREW!!

DEBORAH, WHAT IS IT?

DEBORAH, WAKE UP! YOU'RE HAVING A DREAM...

IT WASN'T A DREAM, DIMITRI! IT WAS ANDREW! I SAW HIM!

HE NEARLY DROWNED TRYING TO SAVE A LITTLE GIRL!

BUT IT WASN'T A DREAM, IT WAS REAL! I'M SURE OF IT! IT JUST WASN'T... *NOW!*

YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, DO YOU?...

WELL, MY DEAR, YOU AND ANDREW WERE UNUSUALLY CLOSE. PERHAPS THE LINK HAS NOT BEEN BROKEN, EVEN BY THE BARRIER OF TIME.

YOU THINK--?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT IT'S POSSIBLE THAT WE'VE FOUND A WAY TO LOCATE ANDREW...

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"AS I PREDICTED, DEEDEE'S PARENTS WERE VERY HAPPY TO HA'E HER BACK..."

...AN' I ALMOS' DROWNED-ED AN' MR. BENNETT HE TURNED INTO A BIG BLACK BAT AN'--

--ER, THAT ISN'T EXACTLY THE WAY IT HAPPENED...

BUT HE DID, MOMMY, HE DID TURN INTO A BA--

HUSH, DEEDEE!

MR. BENNETT, WE'RE VERY GRATEFUL TO YOU! I'M DEEDEE'S MOTHER, EVELYN BREWSTER, AND THIS IS DEEDEE'S STEPFATHER, JACK.

HOW DO YOU DO?

NEW TO THESE PARTS, MR. BENNETT?

ER.., YES! I'M ON VACATION... HITCHHIKING...

(CHUCKLE) FUNNY TIME OF THE YEAR TO BE HITCHHIKING THROUGH MAINE! WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING A NOR'EASTER FOR WEEKS NOW!

WHY NOT SPEND THE NIGHT WITH US, MR. BENNETT? WE'VE PLENTY OF ROOM, AND BY NIGHTFALL IT WON'T BE FIT OUT FOR A MAN ON FOOT.

YES, *PLEASE?* PRETTY PLEASE??

I'D BE DELIGHTED!

"LATER...

...AND THAT'S THE NEWS ON NOVEMBER 1, 1964...

"1964! AND I WAS IN MAINE. I KNEW THE TIME AND LOCALE--

"--NOW ALL I HAD TO DO WAS DISCOVER MARY'S MOTIVE FOR THINKING US HERE!"

MR. BENNETT, WE'RE GOING TO TURN IN, BUT YOU'RE WELCOME TO WATCH TV AS LATE AS YOU WISH. THE GUEST ROOM IS ALL READY FOR YOU.

ONE MORE SHOW FOR YOU, YOUNG LADY, AND THEN TO BED!

YES, MOMMY! G'NIGHT!

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OUR FRIGHT NIGHT MOVIE THIS SATURDAY IS "TERROR OF DRACULA"!

OH, GOODIE, I LOVE SCARY MOVIES! YOU WANNA WATCH THIS, MISTER BENNETT?

NO, THANKS, DEEDEE, I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE... (YAWN!) I THINK I'LL HIT THE SACK. GOODNIGHT.

"IT WAS NOT REST I NEEDED--IT WAS BLOOD! WARM, FRESH, NOURISHING BLOOD TO REPLENISH ME BEFORE I RESUMED MY SEARCH FOR MARY...

"EVEN IN SUCH REMOTE SURROUNDINGS AS THESE, THERE MUST BE A NON-HUMAN BLOOD SOURCE...

"... AND SO THERE WAS..."

HEY! HEY, LOOK AT THAT!

SWEET

MISTER BENNETT, COME LOOK AT THIS! THIS DRACULA GUY CAN TURN HIMSELF INTO A BAT, JUST LIKE YOU!

MISTER BENNETT?

MISTER BENNETT?

7

(GASP!)

SO YOU LIKE BEING SCARED! WELL, TONIGHT YOU'LL LEARN WHAT TERROR *REALLY* IS!

"UNBEKNOWNST TO ME, DEBORAH DANCER AND DIMITRI MISHKIN HAD SOUGHT PROFESSIONAL HELP IN THEIR QUEST TO LOCATE ME IN TIME..."

NOW CONCENTRATE... CONCENTRATE ON THE WATCH...

...UM-M-M...

SHE'S IN A TRANCE?

YES, SHE APPEARS TO BE...

WHAT ARE YOU SEEING, DEBORAH?

...UH...COLD...RAIN POURING DOWN... ANDREW?... CLIFF... OCEAN...OH, NO! NO!!

WHAT, DEBORAH? WHAT IS IT?

IT'S MARY! MARY! AND SHE'S GOING TO--TO *KILL* THE CHILD!

ANDREW! COME GET HER, ANDREW! COME CLAIM YOUR PRIZE!

HE'S CLIMBING... CLIMBING...

GIVE ME THE CHILD, MARY!

AH, BUT YOU MUST TRADE FOR HER. THE CHILD IN EXCHANGE FOR THE RING.

I CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO FOLLOW ME THROUGH TIME FOREVER. GIVE ME THE RING AND I WILL SPARE THE GIRL!

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THE CHILD IS *INNOCENT*, MARY! WHY INVOLVE HER IN THIS?

DON'T YOU KNOW? HAVEN'T YOU DISCOVERED MY LITTLE SECRET YET? *HAHAHAHA!* HOW IRONIC!

TELL THE MAN WHAT YOUR NAME IS, CHILD!

IT'S DEEDEE.

NO, DARLING, I MEAN YOUR *REAL* NAME...

DEEDEE IS YOUR *NICKNAME*. WHAT DID YOUR MOMMY NAME YOU?

OH, THAT. IT'S DEBORAH--

BREWSTER, HER FATHER ALREADY TOLD ME THAT! WHAT ARE YOU DRIVING AT, MARY?

YOU'RE A FOOL, ANDREW BENNETT! DO YOU THINK THERE'S NO METHOD TO MY MADNESS? BREWSTER IS HER *STEP*FATHER'S NAME!

TELL US YOUR REAL NAME, PRECIOUS!

IT'S DANCER. DEBORAH DANCER...

OH MY GOD!!

IT'S ME! MY GOD! THAT LITTLE GIRL IS *ME*!!

DON'T LOSE THE TRANCE, DEBORAH! CONCENTRATE! WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

...HE'S TWISTING OFF THE RING... HE'S GIVING IT TO HER... DON'T ANDREW! DON'T!

ALL RIGHT! YOU WIN! HERE'S YOUR BLOODY RING!

WELL DONE! BRAVO!

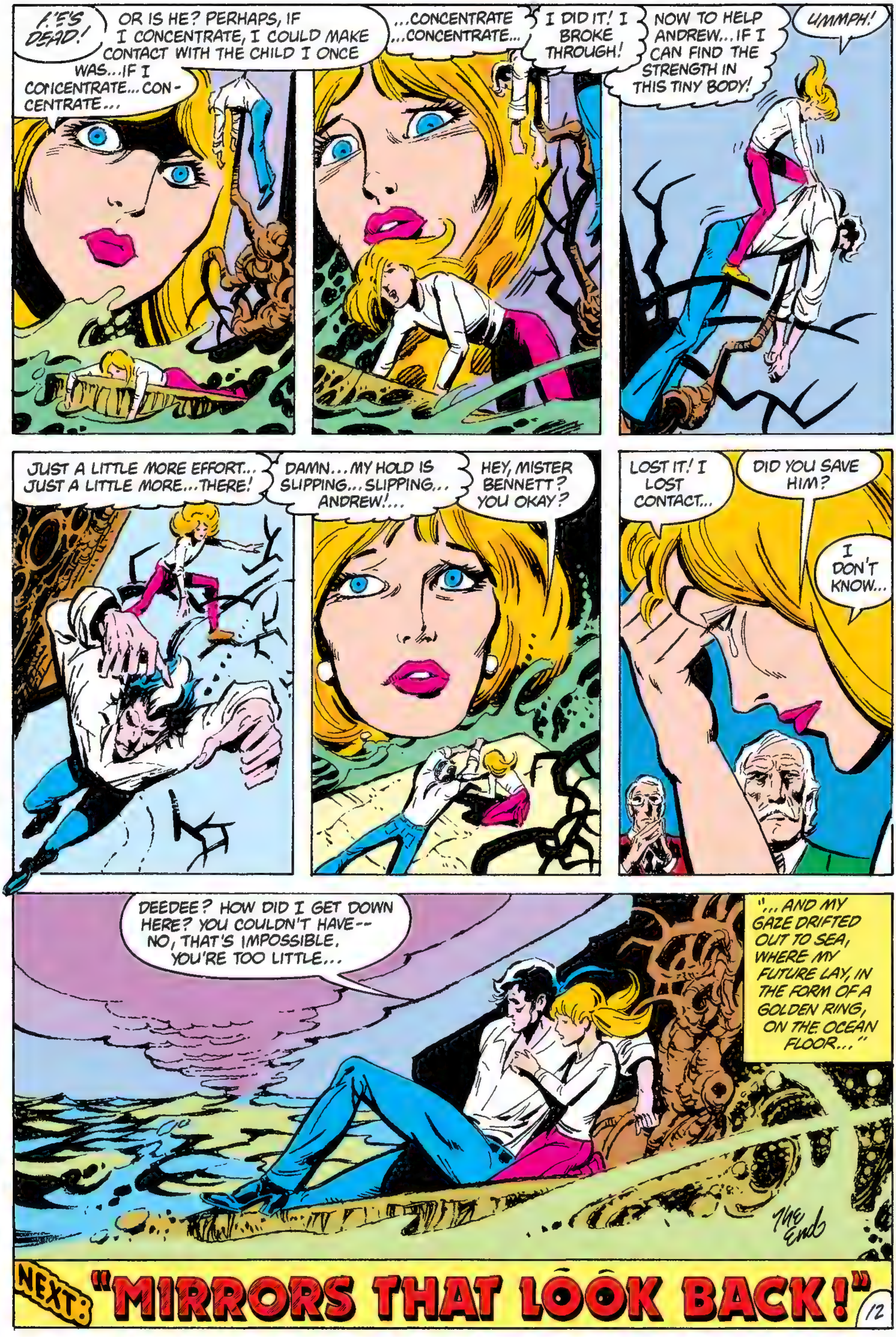
NOW GIVE ME THE CHILD!

YOU ALWAYS WERE TOO TRUSTING, ANDREW DEAR...

NNOOOO

NO

PELOGRI...ETEA...TELEH!


I'E'S DEAD!
OR IS HE? PERHAPS, IF I CONCENTRATE, I COULD MAKE CONTACT WITH THE CHILD I ONCE WAS...IF I CONICENTRATE... CON-CENTRATE...
...CONCENTRATE ...CONCENTRATE...
I DID IT! I BROKE THROUGH!
NOW TO HELP ANDREW...IF I CAN FIND THE STRENGTH IN THIS TINY BODY!
UMMPH!
JUST A LITTLE MORE EFFORT... JUST A LITTLE MORE...THERE!
DAMN...MY HOLD IS SLIPPING...SLIPPING... ANDREW!...
HEY, MISTER BENNETT? YOU OKAY?
LOST IT! I LOST CONTACT...
DID YOU SAVE HIM?
I DON'T KNOW...
DEEDEE? HOW DID I GET DOWN HERE? YOU COULDN'T HAVE-- NO, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. YOU'RE TOO LITTLE...
"...AND MY GAZE DRIFTED OUT TO SEA, WHERE MY FUTURE LAY, IN THE FORM OF A GOLDEN RING, ON THE OCEAN FLOOR..."
THE END
NEXT: "MIRRORS THAT LOOK BACK!"
12

I...Vampire!™

STARRING IN

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

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JOE KUBERT

"400 YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET... WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...Vampire!™

"COASTAL MAINE, 1964. IT WAS THE RING OF KUR-ALET WHICH BROUGHT ME HERE TO THE PAST IN MY PURSUIT OF MARY, AND NOW THAT SAME RING DRIFTS LAZILY DOWN THROUGH THE BLUE-GREEN DEPTHS OF THE COASTAL WATERS, DOWN, SLOWLY DOWN...

"...THROUGH THE WRECKED HULL OF A WORLD WAR II U-BOAT, WHERE IT FINALLY COMES TO REST, NOT ON THE OCEAN FLOOR...

"...BUT ON THE SKELETAL FINGER OF A LONG-DROWNED SEAMAN...

MIRRORS THAT LOOK BACK

BRUCE JONES WRITER / TOM SUTTON ARTIST / A. KAWECKI LETTERER / ADRIENNE COLORIST / KAREN BERGER EDITOR / CREATED BY J.M. DeMATTEIS

"...WHILE ON A ROCKY REEF, THE CHILD NAMED DEEDEE AND I WATCHED THE TURBULENT SEA WITH HOPELESS RESIGNATION...

"FLEEING FROM THE NEWLY-DISCOVERED CANCER SERUM WHICH MADE HUMAN BLOOD DEADLY TO VAMPIRES, MARY HAD FOUND THE MAGIC RINGS OF KUR-ALET, WHICH MADE IT POSSIBLE TO TRAVEL THROUGH TIME AND SPACE...

"SHE HAD COME TO THIS DESOLATE STRETCH OF COAST IN SEARCH OF THE CHILD DEEDEE ...AND HAD USED HER TO BLACKMAIL ME!"

TELL MR. BENNETT YOUR *REAL* NAME, CHILD!

IT'S DEBORAH, DEBORAH DANCER!

NOW GIVE ME YOUR RING, ANDREW! I'LL NOT HAVE YOU FOLLOWING ME THROUGH TIME!

HERE'S YOUR BLOODY RING!

"THEN, USING HER RING, MARY HAD DISAPPEARED ONCE MORE INTO ANOTHER PAST..."

PELOGRI... ETEA... TELEN!

2

"...WHILE MY COUNTERPART RING FLOATED TO THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN..."

MR. BENNETT? I KNOW A MAN WITH A BOAT. MAYBE... MAYBE HE CAN HELP US

PERHAPS HE CAN, DEEDEE... PERHAPS HE CAN...

QUILTY, THIS IS MY FRIEND MR. BENNETT. HE NEEDS TO USE YOUR BOAT.

MY BOAT, EH? IT'S A MITE LATE FOR FISHIN', SON, AIN'T IT?

THAT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU'RE FISHING FOR. I'M WILLING TO PAY YOU FOR YOUR TROUBLES.

ER, WHAT *EXACTLY* ARE YOU FISHIN' FOR?

JUST SOMETHING I DROPPED. IS THIS YOUR BOAT?

YEP. AND CONSIDERIN' THAT YOU'RE A FRIEND OF DEEDEE'S, I'M GONNA THROW MYSELF IN AS CAPTAIN, FREE OF CHARGE!

"MINUTES LATER WE WERE OUT ON THE OCEAN, ANCHORED DIRECTLY OVER THE SPOT WHERE THE RING HIT THE WATER..."

HEY, WATCHA DOIN' THERE, YOUNG FELLA? YOU CAN'T GO DIVING WITHOUT NO EQUIPMENT!

YOU AIN'T EVEN GOT A TANK, AND--

SPLASH

--NEVER MIND...

GOOD LUCK, MR. BENNETT!

3

"BENEATH THE OPAQUE SURFACE, TO MY SURPRISE, LAY A MOST UNEXPECTED SIGHT--THE CRUSTED REMAINS OF A SUNKEN SUBMARINE!

"INSIDE THE HULL, THE WATER SWIRLED DARK AND MURKY. THEN I SAW SOMETHING GLINTING IN THE GLOOM; SOMETHING GOLDEN AND CURVED..."

THE RING!

"I REACHED FOR IT, AND--"

AARGGGHHH!

"BUT BEFORE ME LOOMED ANOTHER HORROR--A HIDEOUS MONSTROSITY OF A CORPSE, DRESSED IN THE UNIFORM OF A NAZI U-BOAT CAPTAIN--

--AND REANIMATED AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF SILENT SLUMBER BY THE MAGICAL POWERS OF THE RING OF KUR-ALET!

"WHILE AROUND ME FLOATED THE MINDLESS BUT NOT LIFELESS CORPSES OF HIS LONG-DEAD CREW...!"

"THEIR ATTACK WAS MECHANICAL AND RELENTLESS AS THEY MOVED TOWARD ME THROUGH THE MURKY WATER, JERKING LIKE DEMENTED MARIONETTES...

"I FOUGHT THEM OFF, MY FINGERS COMING AWAY WITH PIECES OF ROTTING FLESH, BUT THEY WERE IMPERVIOUS...

CAN'T STOP THEM... THEY JUST KEEP COMING! MUST GET TO THE RING!

"BUT I WAS TOO LATE! AS HIS CREW HELD ME PINNED TO THE FLOOR, THE CAPTAIN DISAPPEARED THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE HULL...

NO! MUST STOP HIM!

"MEANWHILE, ON THE SURFACE..."

LOOK, QUILTY, HERE HE COMES! I CAN SEE HIM!

MR. BENNETT, IS THAT YOU?

OH MY GOD!

EEEE

EEEE EEEE EEE

MY GOD, THAT'S DEEDEE! I'VE GOT TO SAVE HER!

EEE EEE

LET HER GO! LET HER GO!

HELP ME!

I THINK YOU'LL DO BETTER WITHOUT THIS, MEIN KAPITAN!

"AND IT WAS TIME, TOO, FOR MY OWN DEPARTURE ...FOR MY SEARCH FOR MARY WAS NOT OVER YET..."

PELOGRI... ETEA... TELEN!

6

"WHEN THE FOG OF MY VISION CLEARED, I FOUND MYSELF STANDING ON A STONE TERRACE SURROUNDED BY SUMMER ROSES AND BATHED IN THE WARM GLOW OF TWILIGHT...

...A TERRACE, THAT, EVEN THROUGH MY CLOUDED MIND, I SOMEHOW RECOGNIZED..."

IT'S--IT'S MARY'S FATHER'S HOME! AND HERE, ON THIS TERRACE, WAS WHERE I FIRST COURTED MY MARY!

"AND SUDDENLY, BEFORE I HAD TIME TO REACT, OUT OF THE ANCESTRAL HOME STEPPED THE MARY OF MY YOUTH, INNOCENT AND RADIANT AS THE SUMMER ROSES, THE MARY I KNEW BEFORE THE RAVAGES OF VAMPIRISM TOOK THEIR HOLD..."

ANDREW! ANDREW MY DEAREST! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE SO EARLY?

DARLING, OUR ENGAGEMENT BALL IS NOT UNTIL EIGHT! IS THAT YOUR COSTUME? HOW ODD IT IS!

MARY? MARY, IS IT REALLY YOU?

OF COURSE IT'S ME, SILLY, WHO ELSE WOULD IT BE?

WHY ANDREW, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

"INSTEAD OF THE RING OF KURALET, I FOUND ONLY THE ENGAGEMENT RING I HAD BROUGHT HER FROM PARIS... AND I KNEW THAT THIS INDEED WAS THE REAL MARY..."

OH, ANDREW! YOU'RE SO SWEET!

NOW, DARLING, FATHER SAYS HE WANTS TO ANNOUNCE OUR ENGAGEMENT RIGHT BEFORE MIDNIGHT...

YES, MARY, ANYTHING YOU SAY...

7

"SHE LED ME TO HER FRONT DOOR, WHERE SHE BID ME A SWEET ADIEU..."

M-M. BUT WILL YOU KISS ME LIKE THAT AFTER OUR WEDDING?

"THEN ONCE MORE THE PAST CONFRONTED ME AND IT WAS NO ONE OTHER THAN MYSELF BEFORE I WAS TAINTED WITH THIS EVIL CURSE!

"I COULD NOT LET MY PURE, SWEET BRIDE-TO-BE SEE THIS SIGHT!"

NOW, HURRY INTO YOUR COSTUME FOR THE BALL!

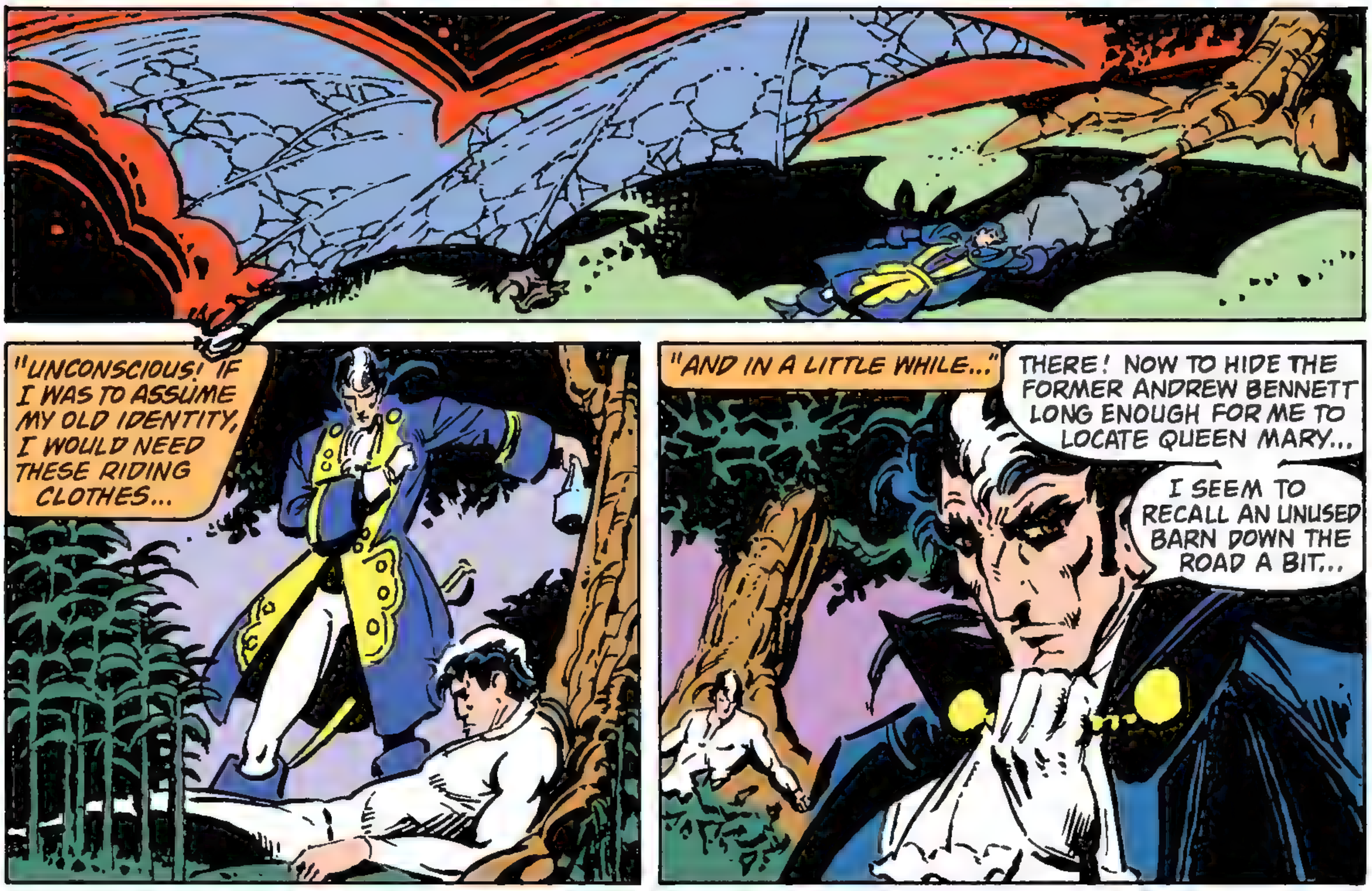
YES, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HURRY! GOODBYE, MY LOVE!

"THERE WAS NO TIME TO LOSE! I HAD TO PREVENT MY FORMER SELF FROM COMING TO SEE MARY --

"--AND IF I WAS EVER TO FIND OUT WHAT EVIL MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD HAD INTENDED TO PERPETRATE, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE IN THE GUISE OF MY FORMER SELF..."

WHA--? GET AWAY!

CLUNK!


"UNCONSCIOUS! IF I WAS TO ASSUME MY OLD IDENTITY, I WOULD NEED THESE RIDING CLOTHES...
"AND IN A LITTLE WHILE..."
THERE! NOW TO HIDE THE FORMER ANDREW BENNETT LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO LOCATE QUEEN MARY...
I SEEM TO RECALL AN UNUSED BARN DOWN THE ROAD A BIT...
NOW UP YOU GO!
"I TUCKED THE BOX CONTAINING THE COSTUME FOR THE BALL UNDER MY ARM, AND WAS PREPARING TO MAKE FOR THE BARN, WHEN--"
HURRY UP, BOYS, BEFORE THE WITCH GETS AWAY!
"THE WITCH HUNTERS! I HAD ALL BUT FORGOTTEN THEM IN THE YEARS THAT HAD PASSED. IN THEIR DAY, THEY DID EVERY BIT AS MUCH HARM AS MARY'S VAMPIRIC FORCES, SIMPLY BY PROJECTING THEIR SUPERSTITIONS ONTO INNOCENT VICTIMS!"
DON'T WORRY, WE'LL CATCH HER! AIN'T WE KILLED TWENTY WITCHES IN JUS' THE LAST FORT-NIGHT? SHE CAN'T GET AWAY FROM US!
9

"THE BARN WAS JUST AS I'D REMEMBERED IT, DESERTED AND REMOTE...

"I COULDN'T AFFORD TO HARM MY FORMER SELF SERIOUSLY, SINCE HIS DEATH WOULD MEAN MY OWN!

"LIKEWISE, IF QUEEN MARY HARMED HER FORMER SELF, THEN SHE, TOO, WOULD BE IN JEOPARDY...

"IT WOULD ALSO BE USELESS FOR MARY TO KILL MY FORMER SELF, FOR IT WAS I WHO DELIVERED THE BITE THAT HAD TURNED HER INTO A VAMPIRE IN THE FIRST PLACE...

"WHAT THEN WAS HER PLAN? I HAD LITTLE TIME TO WONDER..."

THAT YOU, MISTER BENNETT?

WE WAS JUS' LOOKIN' FOR YOU, SIR. WE WANTS YOU TO COME TO THE POND WITH US AND STAND IN JUDGEMENT O' THIS HERE WITCH!

I-I'M SORRY, I CANNOT, I'M DUE AT A COSTUME BALL IN A VERY SHORT TIME...

WE'RE GOIN' TO PUT HER ON THE DUNK-ING STOOL! WHAT'S THE MATTER, AIN'T YA GOT THE STOMACH TO WATCH?

"THE GIRL LOOKED AT ME WITH SUCH TERROR AND PLEAD-ING IN HER EYES THAT FOR A MOMENT I FORGOT ABOUT MARY AND THE BALL AND WAS OVERCOME WITH THE DESIRE TO HELP HER..."

I WILL COME ON ONE CONDITION: THAT YOU ABIDE STRICTLY BY MY JUDGEMENT.

CERTAINLY, GOV'NER! WE RESPECTS THE JUDGEMENT OF A FINE GENTLEMAN SUCH AS YOURSELF!

HA HA HA HA HA

"MEANWHILE, AS I WAS TRYING TO HELP THE UNFORTUNATE GIRL, UNBEKNOWNST TO ME..."

ANNABEL! ANNABEL, WILL YOU COME HELP ME WITH THIS COSTUME? ANNABEL?

WHERE IS THAT GIRL WHEN I NEED HER?

ANNABEL?

OH, THERE YOU ARE! HURRY UP NOW, I HAVE TO GET READY FOR MY PARTY!

DON'T YOU THINK THIS IS THE LOVELIEST COSTUME YOU'VE EVER SEEN? OH, ANNABEL, I'M SO HAPPY!

NOW, QUICK, FIX MY HAIR THE WAY YOU DID WHEN I WENT TO JEANINE'S BALL. I WANT EVERYTHING TO BE JUST PER--

ANNABEL? I CAN'T SEE YOUR REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR! ANNAB--

EEEEEE

NOW, MY SWEET SELF, YOU'LL SOON BE ON THE PATH TO YOUR *TRUE* DESTINY!

I...Vampire!™

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THEN...

...AND NOW!

M.W. KALUTA

"400 YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET... WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I... Vampire!™

"FOR CENTURIES I FOLLOWED MARY WHEREVER HER DESTRUCTIVE PATH LED AS SHE CORRUPTED AND PILLAGED IN HER PURSUIT OF POWER. NOW THAT PATH HAS LED ME TO THE PLACE WHERE IT ALL BEGAN, THE PLACE WHERE WE FIRST MET, BEFORE EITHER OF US WAS TAINTED BY THE BITE OF THE VAMPIRE...

"USING THE RING OF KUR-ALET I HAVE TRAVELED BACK THOSE FOUR CENTURIES IN TIME IN MY QUEST FOR MARY, AND HAVE FOUND MYSELF FACING ANOTHER KIND OF EVIL...

"... THE EVIL PERPETRATED BY THOSE SUPERSTITIOUS ZEALOTS WHO SEEK TO RID THE COUNTRYSIDE OF EVIL--THE WITCH HUNTERS!"

OH GOD HELP ME! I'M INNOCENT! INNOCENT!

DUNK HER! DUNK THE WITCH!

TES 82

WITCH HUNT

BRUCE JONES writer • TOM SUTTON artist • JOHN COSTANZA letterer • ADRIENNE ROY colorist • KAREN BERGER editor

1

"EARLIER I HAD ARRIVED HERE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY...

"...AND ON THE TERRACE AMIDST THE SUMMER ROSES, I HAD ENCOUNTERED NOT MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD, BUT THE SIMPLE, SWEET MARY WITH WHOM I HAD FALLEN IN LOVE SO LONG AGO!

"A MARY WHO EXISTED BEFORE WE WERE BOTH SWEPT AWAY IN A VAMPIRIC TIDE. BUT IF MARY HAD A COUNTER-PART, SO DID I...

"I SENT MARY BACK INSIDE AND THEN, TURNING INTO A BAT, ATTACKED MY FORMER SELF--

"AFTER CHANGING CLOTHES WITH HIS UNCONSCIOUS FORM, I BOUND AND HID HIS BODY IN A NEARBY BARN...

"...AND WAS ON MY WAY BACK TO MARY'S MANSION TO ATTEND THE COSTUME PARTY THAT WOULD ANNOUNCE OUR ENGAGE-MENT, WHEN--"

WE WAS JUS' LOOKING FER YOU, SIR. WE WANTS YOU TO COME TO THE POND WITH US AND STAND IN JUDGEMENT OF THIS 'ERE WITCH!

"THEY HAD TAKEN ME FOR MY FORMER SELF-- THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING I COULD DO..."

I WILL COME ON ONE CONDITION! THAT YOU ABIDE STRICTLY BY MY JUDGEMENT.

"NOW I STOOD AT THE EDGE OF THE POND AS THIS SUPERSTITIOUS LYNCH MOB PREPARED A TEST OF THE POOR GIRL'S VERACITY..."

YA SEE, GOV'NER, WE TIES HER ON THE DUNKIN' STOOL AND PUSHES HER INTO THE WATER. THEN WE LEAVES HER FOR A TIME.

IF SHE LIVES, THEN SHE'S A WITCH AND WE BURNS HER AT THE STAKE...

AND IF SHE DROWNS?

(HEH-HEH) WHY THEN, SHE'S INNOCENT, OF COURSE!

IF THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT, THEN YOU'VE NO NEED FOR ME! I'VE A BALL TO ATTEND, I HAVE NO TIME TO WASTE HERE! GOOD DAY!

NOOO! PLEASE COME BACK! HELP ME!

SHUT UP, WITCH!

HMPH! THEM NOBLEMEN, THEY'RE ALL ALIKE. WATER RUNNIN' IN THEIR VEINS, 'STEAD OF BLOOD!

3

"I KNEW I STOOD NO CHANCE OF SAVING HER THERE, BUT IF I COULD GET OUT OF SIGHT FIRST...

"I COULD RE-APPEAR QUITE DIFFERENTLY!"

THAT'S RIGHT! DOWN SHE GOES!

ALL RIGHT, HORACE! BRING 'ER UP!

LORD, CASEY, LOOK AT THAT! SHE'S GONE!

IT CAN'T BE!

DON'T ASK QUESTIONS! JUST WAIT HERE UNTIL THEY GO, THEN FLEE FOR YOUR LIFE!

4

"AND WHILE I WAS ENGAGED WITH THE WITCH HUNTERS, MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD, WAS LIKEWISE ENGAGED... WITH HER FORMER SELF!"

NOW, MY SWEET SELF, YOU'LL SOON BE ON THE PATH TO YOUR TRUE DESTINY!

"LATER... I ARRIVED AT THE COSTUME PARTY, DRESSED IN THE COSTUME MY FORMER SELF HAD CARRIED UNDER HIS ARM..."

MR. ANDREW BENNETT!

"MARY'S FATHER CAME FORWARD OUT OF THE CROWD TO WELCOME ME, BUT MY BELOVED MARY WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN..."

ANDREW, MY BOY, WHAT A SPLENDID COSTUME!

THANK YOU, SIR! YOU LOOK QUITE WELL YOURSELF!

AH, BUT I'M FEELING MY AGE NOW THAT MY LITTLE MARY'S ALL GROWN UP! TO THINK THAT SHE'S GOING TO ANNOUNCE HER ENGAGEMENT TONIGHT--IT DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE!

WHERE IS MY BRIDE-TO-BE?

YOU KNOW WOMEN! (CHUCKLE!) SHE'S PROBABLY STILL FUSSING WITH HER COSTUME!

SHALL WE TOAST HER?-- TO MY LOVELY DAUGHTER, WHO WILL MAKE AN EVEN LOVELIER BRIDE!

5

TO MARY!

CLANK

AND THERE SHE IS!

"SHE SWEPT INTO THE ROOM LIKE A QUEEN, A LACE MASK HIDING HER FACE, HER FLAME-COLORED HAIR CASCADING BEHIND HER..."

FATHER! HAVE YOU BEEN TAKING GOOD CARE OF MY FIANCÉ?

NOT AS GOOD A CARE AS YOU SHALL, MY DEAR. WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?

I HAD TO MAKE AN ENTRANCE, DIDN'T I?

IS IT MY TURN NOW?

OH, ANDREW!

CHILDREN, PLEASE! YOU'RE NOT MARRIED YET!

6

"THE DIAMOND ENGAGEMENT RING SPARKLED ON HER FINGER; IN HER EYES GLITTERED THE LIGHT OF INNOCENCE...

"...AT LEAST I THOUGHT IT WAS THE LIGHT OF INNOCENCE..."

PARDON US, FATHER! ANDREW HAS PROMISED ME THIS DANCE!

"JUST BEING IN HER ARMS WAS PARADISE! I COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT MY VAMPIRIC NEMESIS AND CONCENTRATED ON HER CHARMING COUNTERPART..."

DARLING, WHAT IS IT? YOU SEEM DISTRACTED.

ARE YOU HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT OUR MARRIAGE?

"HOW COULD I TELL HER THAT I HAD SEEN HER FUTURE --AND IT DID NOT INCLUDE MARRIAGE?"

IT'S NOTHING, MARY! NOTHING AT ALL...

"THE CANDELABRAS BLAZED AS WE DANCED THROUGH THE CROWD OF MASKED GUESTS...

7

"MEANWHILE, IN AN ABANDONED BARN NOT FAR AWAY..."

"AT LAST THE TIME HAD COME TO ANNOUNCE OUR ENGAGEMENT. MARY'S FATHER STOOD BEFORE THE CONGREGATION OF PARTYGOERS AND TAPPED ON HIS GLASS, REQUESTING SILENCE..."

FRIENDS, I HAVE AN ANNOUNCE-MENT TO MAKE!

I--WHAT'S THAT?...

LET US IN, MAN!

YEAH, WE GOT TO FIND THE WITCH!

SEE HERE, MAN: YOU CAN'T JUST BURST IN HERE LIKE TH--

SORRY, GOV'NER, BUT WE GOT A DUTY TO PERFORM!

SCATTER OUT, MEN! SEARCH EVERY CORNER!

WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?

WELL, YOU SEE, SIR, WE WAS ATTEMPTIN' TO DUNK THIS HERE WITCH, WHEN--

HERE, YOU TELL IT, GIRL!

I-I WAS ON THE DUNKIN' STOOL, UNDER THE WATER, WHEN THIS BIG BLACK *BAT* FLEW INTO THE POND, AND-- AND--

YES? YES?

--AND IT TURNED INTO A *MAN*, RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES!

9

YA SEE, SIR, IT'S WITCH-CRAFT, PLAIN AND SIMPLE! AN' THE WITCH IS PRO-BABLY HERE RIGHT NOW, HIDIN' BEHIND A MASK!

NONSENSE! YOU MUST LEAVE AT ONCE!

WELL, GIRL? DO YE SEE THE WARLOCK ANYWHERE?

I--I...

SPEAK UP, GIRL, OR WE'LL BURN YE INSTEAD!

THERE! THERE HE IS!

NO, THE WITCH IS NOT I, GIRL, FOR I WAS ATTACKED BY THE SAME WAR-LOCK, IN THE FORM OF A BAT!

BUT HE *IS* IN THIS ROOM--

--AND DRESSED IN *MY COSTUME!*

10

AND NOW, WARLOCK, REVEAL YOURSELF!

(GASP!) MY GOD! IT'S ME!

"I LOOKED UP AND SAW, TO MY HORROR, THAT MARY HAD REMOVED HER MASK, REVEALING A FACE FILLED WITH MALEVOLENCE AS SHE SHOUTED OUT AN ORDER..."

HERE IS YOUR WITCH, GENTLEMEN! SEIZE HIM!

YOU LOST THIS BATTLE, ANDREW! I--I--

"THE RING OF KURA-LET WAS NOW PLAINLY VISIBLE, SWINGING ON A CHAIN ROUND HER NECK..."

IT'S HER! SHE'S LOCKED IN THE CLOSET! SHE'LL DIE!

AND IF *SHE* DIES, I DIE!

"SUDDENLY HER FACE TURNED FLUSH AND HER EYES BULGED... AS A BLAZE OF FIRE WENT UP IN THE CROWD..."

I'M BURNING UP!

I FEEL AS IF I'M SUFFOCATING!

MARY, WAIT! I DON'T UNDER STAND!

"I SUMMONED ALL MY STRENGTH AND FLUNG THE WITCH HUNTERS AWAY FROM ME!"

STOP HIM!

CAPTURE THE WITCH!

DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE!

"WE ARRIVED IN MARY'S BEDROOM JUST IN TIME TO SEE--"

MARY, MY GOD! MARY!

LOOK THERE! THEN SHE MUST BE A WITCH, TOO!

"WITH THE RING ROUND HER NECK INSTEAD OF HER FINGER, MARY WAS HELPLESS. I SAW MY OPPORTUNITY..

"AS I VANISHED IN A VORTEX OF TIME, I HEARD HER SCREAM OF FRUSTRATION AND FEAR..."

BENNETT! NO!! YOU CAN'T--

PELOGRI ETEA JELEN!

"...AND THEN, WITH DIZZYING ABRUPTNESS, I FOUND MYSELF IN A NEW PLACE AT A NEW TIME...

"...AND PRAYED TO GOD THAT MY LOATHESOME UNDEAD DAYS WOULD SOON COME TO REST... FOREVER."

NEXT: "MANHATTAN INTERLUDE"

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PRESENTS

I...VAMPIRE!™

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD! TODAY AN UNHOLY ORDER FOLLOWS HER EVIL DESIGNS, AND THE BLOOD THEY SPILL IS ON MY HANDS! THUS I MUST STOP HER...

...I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...Vampire!

I'VE CHASED YOU ACROSS *FOUR CENTURIES,* MARY --THEN BACK AGAIN THROUGH TIME, THANKS TO THE CURSED RINGS OF KUR-ALET...

I FOLLOWED YOU BACK TO THE TIME OF OUR INNOCENCE ...I LISTENED TO YOUR... PROMISES THAT IT COULD SOMEHOW BE RESIGNED AND LONGED TO *BELIEVE THEM!*

NO MORE!

OUR INNOCENCE IS DEAD-- EVEN IF MY *LOVE* FOR YOU IS NOT...

Manhattan Interlude

GONZALES & SUTTON · ARTISTS
MISHKIN & COHN · WRITERS
ADRIENNE ROY · COLORIST
ANDREWS · LETTERER
KAREN BERGER · EDITOR
J.M. DeMATTEIS · CREATOR

...DAMN YOU!

"I KNEW THAT MARY WOULD SOON RETURN TO THIS TIME-- FOR THE BEARER OF THE MATCHING RING MUST FOLLOW THE FIRST WITHIN HALF A DAY-- OR ELSE BE DISPLACED IN TIMELESS LIMBO!

"AND THOUGH I REALIZED THE CHASE WOULD SOON RESUME...

"...FOR THIS ONE NIGHT I WANTED NO PART OF IT!

"I TOOK SOME SMALL COMFORT IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WITHOUT MY COMPLIANT USE OF ONE OF THE RINGS--

"--THE OTHER WOULD BE USELESS TO HER... AND HER EVIL WOULD AT LEAST BE CONFINED TO THE PRESENT ERA...

"AND I PRAYED THAT NO ONE, LIVING OR UNDEAD, WOULD LAY EYES ON THOSE TWO HATEFUL RINGS AGAIN!

"BUT WHO, I WONDERED, ANSWERS A VAMPIRE'S PRAYERS?"

2

"I STALKED THE SILENT CITY STREETS SO LONELY IN ITS CONCRETE CANYONS...I NEEDED TO FIND MY ONLY TWO FRIENDS, DEBORAH DANCER AND DMITRI MISHKIN...

"MORE THAN THAT I NEEDED HUMAN CONTACT WITH ONE UNTAINTED BY VAMPIRISM, EITHER AS VICTIM OR VICTIMIZER--

"--TO TOUCH ANOTHER CONSCIOUSNESS THAT WAS FULL OF LIFE AND ALL ITS MUNDANE STRUGGLES, ITS DAILY TRIUMPHS AND TRAGEDIES...AND ITS TRIVIA...

"PERHAPS A LOQUACIOUS NEW YORK CABBIE WOULD FIT THE BILL, I THOUGHT...

"BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE--"

I BEG YOUR PARDON, MISS...TAKE THE TAXI--I'LL WAIT FOR ANOTHER.

IT'S AWFULLY LATE TO BE STANDING AROUND ALONE IN THIS PART OF TOWN... WHY DON'T WE SHARE THIS ONE?

"AS WE RODE, SHE SPOKE IN MUTED TONES, HER VOICE WEARY BUT UNDAUNTED--

"AND I FOUND MYSELF STRANGLY DRAWN TO THIS MELANCHOLY BEAUTY, WHOSE SPIRIT SHONE THROUGH WHATEVER HARDSHIPS SHE HAD BORNE...

"IT WAS AN ATTRACTION I REALIZED COULD PROVE DANGEROUS TO US BOTH!"

DRIVER, PLEASE STOP--I'LL GET OUT HERE...

NO, DON'T--! I COULD REALLY USE THE COMPANY--AND YOU SEEM LIKE YOU COULD TOO...

"SHE SAID SHE KNEW A QUIET LITTLE SPOT WHERE WE COULD HAVE A DRINK...AND I WENT ALONG--

"--KNOWING THAT NO COCKTAIL COULD SLAKE MY THIRST...!"

I THINK I'LL HAVE A BLOODY MARY.

EH--? OH, YES... THE SAME FOR ME, I SUPPOSE...

"SHE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE THAT CHOICE WOULD HAVE FOR ME--

"OR THE LONGINGS THAT IT STIRRED, AND THAT I MUST NOT YIELD TO..."

YOU KNOW, ANDREW, I DON'T USUALLY PICK UP MEN... BUT SOMETIMES I HAVE THIS--*NEED.*

BUT IT HASN'T WORKED OUT WITH ME AND MEN--NOT SINCE *JACK*... AND I WOULDN'T SAY THAT THAT WORKED OUT EITHER.

"SUSAN SEEMED TO HAVE A TALE TO TELL--AND IT WAS JUST SUCH CONTACT WITH THE LIVING WORLD THAT I'D BEEN SEEKING...

"SO I LISTENED AS SHE TOLD ME OF THE MAN SHE'D MET AT A PARTY-- THE MOST EXCITING MAN SHE'D EVER KNOWN, SHE SAID...

"A MAN THAT I RE-MINDED HER OF...

"SHE WAS DELIRIOUS, ENRAPTURED BY HIS SPELL--HER NIGHTS WITH JACK! LIKE A FANTASY UNDREAMT OF..."

4

"THOSE NIGHTS WERE ALL SHE LIVED FOR--THOUGH IN THE MORNING SHE OFTEN COULDN'T REMEMBER EXACTLY WHAT THEY'D DONE THE EVENING BEFORE... AND DRAINED BY THEIR SOIREES, SHE SOON WAS BARELY WILLING TO FACE THE DAY!

"HE WAS LIKE A DRUG TO HER--AN ADDICTION! SHE WAS BEING RAPIDLY CONSUMED, BUT COULD NOT TEAR FREE FROM HIS HOLD...

"AND FINALLY IT WAS HE WHO ABANDONED HER...AFTER USING HER, HUMILIATING HER, HE DISCARDED HER, STILL BEGGING FOR HIS FAVORS..."

I HAVEN'T REALLY BEEN THE SAME SINCE THEN--JUST ANOTHER OF THE *WALKING WOUNDED* TRYING TO GO ON.

BUT SOMETIMES I NEED A MAN'S COMPANIONSHIP... HIS *WARMTH*...

I KNOW, SUSAN--I, TOO HAVE BEEN GRAVELY DAMAGED IN LOVE--AND I BEAR THE SCARS TO THIS DAY.

THEN YOU *DO* UNDERSTAND...

OH ANDREW--LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! NEITHER OF US HAS *TOUCHED* OUR DRINKS... LET'S GO FOR A WALK OR SOMETHING...

5

"FOR AN HOUR OR MORE WE WALKED, HARDLY SAYING A WORD--NO LONGER LONELY, BUT ALONE TOGETHER...

"I LET HER STEER OUR COURSE, AND MADE NO PROTESTATIONS WHEN SHE TOOK US TO A DARKENED CUL-DE-SAC...

"NOR DID I HESITATE WHEN SHE SPOKE MY NAME AS LOVERS DO..."

ANDREW ...COME TO ...ME...

"I WANTED HER AS I'D WANTED NO WOMAN FOR SO LONG--WITH ALL MY SOUL'S DESIRE...

"IN MY HEART I TOLD MYSELF THAT THIS WAS MY BELOVED MARY MADE PURE ONCE AGAIN..."

SUSAN, I--

"THEN I LEARNED ONCE AGAIN THE LESSON--

"...OF LOST INNOCENCE..."

NO--NO! BY ALL I ONCE HELD HOLY, NO!

WHAT--? HOW DID YOU BREAK FREE!?

...DON'T YOU SEE, YOU PATHETIC FOOL...

...DON'T YOU SEE WHAT A FINE JOKE FATE HAS PLAYED UP-ON US?

"THE FIGHT--THE LUST, FOR BLOOD OR ANY-THING ELSE--WENT OUT OF HER..."

DEAR GOD...OH MY DEAR GOD...

"AND AT LENGTH SHE SPOKE..."

WHAT--WHAT HAP-PENS NOW?

NOW? NOW I DO THAT WHICH I MUST-- FOR I'VE SWORN TO DESTROY ALL OF MY VAMPIRIC KIND!

DESTROY--? BUT WHY?

BECAUSE THE *HELLISH AFFLIC-TION* WE BOTH SHARE WILL ULTIMATELY RAVAGE THE *WHOLE HUMAN RACE* IF LEFT UNCHECKED...

AND BE-CAUSE I MUST MAKE AMENDS FOR MY OWN CON-TRIBUTION TO THAT *EVIL TIDE!*

BUT ANDREW, I'VE NEVER --*KILLED* A PERSON...I COULD *NEVER* DO TO ANY-ONE ELSE WHAT JACK DID TO ME!

I STEAL *BOT-TLED BLOOD* WHEN I CAN...AND IF I *MUST* TAKE A MAN, I DRINK ONLY WHAT I HAVE TO--TO *SURVIVE!*

7

"HER WORDS AT ONCE REKINDLED MY DYING FAITH..."

THEN YOU ARE MUCH LIKE ME! AND YOU CAN JOIN ME IN MY MISSION!

NO, ANDREW...I DON'T HAVE YOUR DRIVE, YOUR ANGER--YOUR SENSE OF *RIGHT-EOUS FURY*...

YES, OF COURSE--MY MISSION IS MY OWN, AND I HAVE NO RIGHT TO FORCE IT UPON YOU.

WHAT YOU NEED NOW IS BLOOD! WE CAN TURN INTO BATS AND FIND SOME FOR YOU.

INTO BATS--?

HAVEN'T YOU LEARNED TO *TRANSFORM YOUR-SELF* TO A BAT...OR A WOLF, OR MIST?

I NEVER SOUGHT OUT CONTACT WITH OTHERS WHO ARE--LIKE US...AND IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO ME TO TRY SUCH THINGS!

"WITH A MOMENT'S CONCENTRATION SHE FOUND SHE *COULD* MAKE THE CHANGE..."

THIS IS SO *EXCITING*... I NEVER DREAMED OF WHAT ABIL-ITIES I MUST HAVE!

"I SENSED THE EXHILARATION SHE WAS FEELING...I FELT IT TOO--BUT NOT WITHOUT A VAGUE SENSE OF UNEASE...

HOSPITAL OF ST

"... A SENSE THAT GREW WHILE WE SHARED AN *UNHOLY COMMUNION* OF BOTTLED BLOOD!

8

"AND JUST AS THAT IMPIOUS SACRAMENT HAD RELEASED HER MOMENTARILY FROM THE BURDENS OF RAVENING BLOODLUST--

"--SO WAS I RELEASING HER FROM THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE MORALITY SHE'D CLUNG TO UNTIL THEN--

"...BY INDUCTING HER INTO THE WAYS OF SUPERNATURAL POWER..."

OH, ANDREW, THERE MUST BE SO MUCH *MORE* THAT YOU CAN TEACH ME!

SUSAN, PLEASE ...*PLEASE* DON'T TALK THAT WAY!

"I STRUGGLED FOR THE WORDS TO CONVEY MY CONCERNS, THOUGH FEARING SHE WAS ALREADY DEAF TO REASON--"

I LOVED A WOMAN ONCE, LONG AGO--AND WHEN I WAS MADE THE THING I AM, SHE OFFERED TO SHARE MY *IMMORTAL CURSE!*

BUT SHE WAS SEDUCED BY THE POWER THAT NOW LAY WITHIN HER REACH, AND BECAME A CREATURE OF *UNDYING EVIL!*

YES, IT'S EASY TO UNDERSTAND...IT'S PRECISELY HOW I FEEL!

IT'S AS THOUGH I'VE GONE HUNGRY ALL MY LIFE, THEN SUDDENLY BEEN INVITED TO A *NEVER-ENDING FEAST!*

I COULDN'T RESIST THE LURE OF THAT ANYMORE THAN YOUR LONG-AGO LOVER COULD...

9

AND I'LL END UP JUST LIKE HER, ANDREW--A MONSTER UNLEASHED ON THE WORLD TORMENTING YOUR CONSCIENCE!

BUT SUSAN, YOU CAN TRY...!

I'M NOT AS STRONG AS YOU ARE -- I TOLD YOU THAT BEFORE.

LOOK--THE SUN WILL BE UP SOON... I'VE MISSED THE DAYLIGHT SO MUCH AND ESPECIALLY THE SUNRISES!

NO, SUSAN, YOU CAN'T--

HUSH--DON'T BLAME YOURSELF...YOU NEVER MEANT FOR THIS TO HAPPEN.

BUT IT'S BETTER TO END IT THIS WAY, WITH A SHRED OF MY HUMANITY LEFT!

AND AT LEAST I'LL SEE ONE MORE SUNRISE...

10

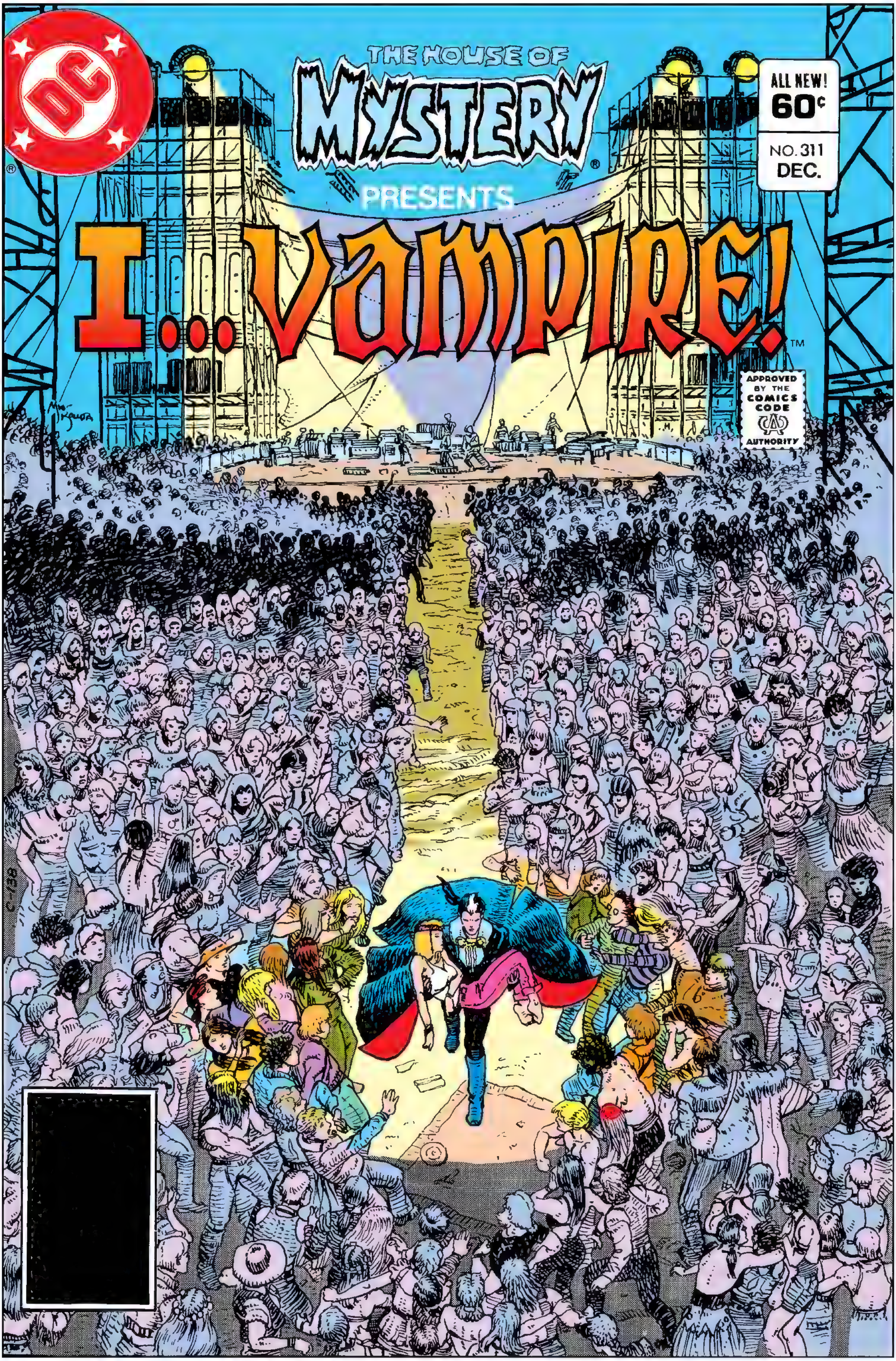
"I DIDN'T TURN TO LOOK BACK AS I SOUGHT A PLACE IN THE STILL DARK CITY TO WAIT OUT THE DAY...

"BUT I WONDERED IF--WHEN MY MISSION IS FINALLY OVER --I WOULD FIND THE SAME COURAGE AS SHE...

"...TO OPEN WIDE MY ARMS AND EMBRACE THE KILLING SUN'S ARRIVAL, AS IN THE TERRIBLE ECSTACY OF MY FINAL MOMENTS--

"-- A NEW DAY DAWNS..."

END


THE HOUSE OF
MYSTERY
PRESENTS
I...Vampire!
ALL NEW!
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"400 YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD. TODAY, SHE SEEKS UNDEAD DOMINATION OF THE PLANET WHILE I SEEK TO STOP HER BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...VAMPIRE!™

"MY HURRIED SEARCH FOR SHELTER FROM THE DAWN HAD BROUGHT ME HERE, TO A GREENWICH VILLAGE REVIVAL MOVIE HOUSE...

EXIT

"AND NOW, HOURS LATER, AS THE PROJECTOR ROLLED, IT UNFOLDED BEFORE MY EYES A PIECE OF MY OWN PAST--

"TAKING ME AGAIN TO A FARM IN UPSTATE NEW YORK IN 1969 AND AN EVENT CALLED--"

WOOD STOCK

OH, WOW, MARGOT, LOOK AT THAT CHICK... SHE WAS SO *SPACED OUT* THAT SHE THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMEONE STANDING THERE WITH HER--

--WHEN SHE WAS ALL ALONE...

"BUT YOUNG DEBORAH DANCER HAD **NOT** BEEN ALONE THAT DAY... AND THE UNSEEN CHEST SHE WEPT AGAINST--

"--WAS MINE!"

J8494

"BY THE TIME WE GOT TO WOODSTOCK..."

MISHKIN & COHN WRITERS / CULLINS, GONZALES & SUTTON ARTISTS / ODA LETTERER / ADRIENNE COLORIST / KAREN BERGER EDITOR / CREATED BY J.M. De MATTEIS

"I HAD TRAVELED TO WOODSTOCK ON THE TRAIL OF THE EVIL MARY AND HER BLOOD RED MOON OPERATIVES...

"THEY HAD GONE--AS I'D TOLD MY COMPANION, DMITRI MISHKIN--IN SEARCH OF STRONG YOUNG SOULS TO BRING INTO THEIR RANKS...

"...TO RECRUIT, ONE MIGHT SAY, NEW BLOOD...!"

HEY, YOU GUYS, SCARF AN EYELOAD OF THIS SCHOOL BUS...LET'S SEE IF WE CAN TAKE A PEEK INSIDE!

HOWIE, DON'T--IT LOOKS KIND OF CREEPY!

DON'T BE SILLY, DEBBIE...WE'VE ALL COME HERE FOR PEACE, LOVE, AND ROCK 'N'--

WHOA!

WHATCHA LOOKIN' FOR, LITTLE BRO?

N-NOTHING, MAN--! I WAS JUST-- JUST--Y'KNOW, LOOKING--!

"DEBORAH LATER TOLD ME OF HER FRIGHT AT THE OLDER YOUTH'S MENACING DEMEANOR--"

LEAVE HIM ALONE! HE WASN'T HURTING ANYBODY!

"--AND HER SURPRISE AT HIS ABRUPT CHANGE IN ATTITUDE MOMENTS LATER..."

YEAH--SORRY... DIDN'T MEAN TO LAY ANY BAD VIBES ON YA...

SAY, WE'RE PLANNIN' A PARTY FOR LATER ON... YOU KIDS ARE WELCOME TO COME!

2

"THE INVITATION WAS EAGERLY ACCEPTED BY DEBORAH'S FRIENDS, AND THE FESTIVITIES BEGAN SHORTLY AFTER SUNDOWN...

"AS THE NIGHT WORE ON, THE PARTY'S HOSTS ENTHRALLED THE YOUNGSTERS, SINGING PRAISES OF A COUNTER-CULTURAL LIFESTYLE... ENTHRALLED THEM ALL, THAT IS--

"--EXCEPT DEBORAH..."

ADAM, LET'S SPLIT...THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THESE PEOPLE!

YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS IS ALL.

NO, I'M NOT, BUT I-- THEY...

"UNABLE TO PUT A NAME TO THE COLD SENSE OF FOREBODING THAT SHE FELT, DEBORAH TURNED AWAY, DETERMINED TO TAKE NO PART IN THE PROCEEDINGS...

"BUT OTHERS WERE EQUALLY DETERMINED TO INCLUDE HER--"

WHAT'S THE HANG UP, LITTLE FLOWER?

I JUST WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE, ALL RIGHT?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET SO HOSTILE, BABE...

I MEAN IT! LEAVE ME--

AWAY, YOU BLOODSUCKING FILTH!

BENNETT! QUEEN MARY SAID WE'D BE SEEING YOU...

AND SHE PROMISED A REWARD TO THE ONE WHO BRINGS HER YOUR BONES TO PICK HER TEETH WITH!

3

"HIS THREATS WERE BOLD, BUT HIS EX-PERIENCE WAS NO MATCH FOR MINE..."

YAAAGH!

"BUT EVEN AS I ENDED HIS UNDEAD EXISTENCE, YOUNG DEBORAH RETURNED TO THE VERY DEN THAT HAD SPAWNED HIM!"

CAROLYN! WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HERE! THAT GUY WAS GONNA DO SOMETHING HORRIBLE!-- CAROLYN?!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HER? WHO *ARE* YOU PEOPLE?

"THEN SHE HEARD A SOUND, A LOWING FROM THE JET BLACK SCHOOL BUS...

"... AN EXPIRING MOAN THAT MIGHT SIGNIFY THE CULMINATION OF RAPTURE ... OR THE CEASING OF A LIFE!"

ADAM!

"THE TERRIFIED GIRL FLED WITH TEARS STREAMING DOWN HER CHEEKS, RUNNING AIMLESSLY AND WITHOUT HOPE..."

STOP HER! BRING HER TO ME!

"... BUT RUNNING IN FACT TOWARD THE ONLY ONE OF THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS THERE ON YASGUR'S FARM WHO WOULD BOTH BELIEVE IN -- AND PROTECT HER FROM -- THE UNHOLY EVIL BY WHICH SHE WAS PURSUED!"

OOOH!

GGG!

WHO-- WHO ARE YOU? I FEEL... AS THOUGH I KNOW YOU FROM SOME-WHERE...

FROM YOUR NIGHT-MARES, PERHAPS... BUT COME WITH ME NOW, WE HAVEN'T MUCH TIME...

"AS I LEARNED ONLY MUCH LATER, SHE HAD KNOWN ME, THOUGH I HAD NO RECOLLECTION OF HER...

"INDEED, IT WOULD BE MORE THAN A DECADE BEFORE I WOULD TRAVEL BACK IN TIME TO MEET AN EVEN YOUNGER DEBORAH DANCER IN 1964...

"BUT, OF COURSE, I WAS UNAWARE OF THIS CONUNDRUM AS I LEFT THE GIRL IN MISHKIN'S CARE, WHILE I RETREATED TO DAYTIME SLUMBER!

"AND AS I SLEPT, SO DID DEBORAH, EXHAUSTED FROM THE NIGHT'S HORRORS... MISHKIN, TOO, DOZED IN THE HEARSE'S CAB...

"BUT EVEN IN THE DAY, WE WEREN'T SAFE FROM OUR UNDEAD ENEMIES --

"FOR THEN, MARY'S STILL-LIVING LACKEYS DID THE WORK OF THE BLOOD RED MOON...

CREAK

EEEEK!

HUH?

AWAKENED BY DEBORAH'S CRY, I FACED MY GAUNT ATTACKER... AND WITH HIS ADVANTAGE OF NOONDAY SURPRISE LOST, HE KNEW AS WELL AS I --

"--THAT THERE WAS NO CONTEST BETWEEN US!"

WKRIQ

5

PLEASE, YOUNG LADY, BY ALL THAT YOU HOLD OF VALUE...

CLOSE THIS DAMNED BOX!

"AND THAT EVENING, WHEN I ROSE ONCE MORE..."

STAY WITH MISHKIN TONIGHT, DEBORAH... I HAVE--BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO...

I SAW IT, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT... *VAMPIRES!* AND HERE WHERE THE AIR'S SUPPOSED TO BE FILLED WITH *LOVE AND HARMONY*...

BUT WHAT ABOUT MR. BENNETT? WHY IS HE SO *DIFFERENT* FROM THE OTHERS?

"THOUGH I HEARD HER QUESTION I DIDN'T LISTEN FOR MISHKIN'S REPLY...

"BUT IF I HAD ANSWERED, I MIGHT HAVE TOLD HER THAT I WAS SEEKING THE SAME *GOOD SPIRIT* THAT SHE HAD HOPED TO FIND AT WOODSTOCK--

"-- OR WAS SEEKING RATHER TO *PRESERVE* THAT SPIRIT FROM AN EVIL I HAD UNLEASHED UPON IT!

"FOR I KNEW THE BASIC GOODNESS OF HUMANITY STILL REIGNED, ESPECIALLY THERE AT THE FESTIVAL...

"MISHKIN, KNOWING IT TOO, WAS PERHAPS TOO LAX IN THE GUARD HE GAVE HIS YOUNG CHARGE...

6

KEEP COOL, CHICKIE-- IF YOU START SHOUTIN', *THEY'RE* GONNA HEAR YA!

:MMMF:

B'LIEVE ME, YER GONNA PREFER WHAT I'VE GOT PLANNED TO GETTIN' TURNED INTO A VAMPIRE!

ALL THEY'D WANNA DO WITH A HOT-BLOODED GIRL LIKE YOU IS DRAIN YA! AND THAT SEEMS LIKE A REAL--

ANIMAL!

THWONK

"DESPITE MISHKIN'S TIMELY ARRIVAL, DEBORAH'S ANXIETIES DID NOT ABATE...

"HER FEAR ONLY GREW-- AS DID HER CERTAINTY ABOUT THE FATE THAT HAD BEFALLEN HER FRIENDS... AND HER SIMPLE REACTION--"

NO--WAIT!

"--WAS TO FLEE!"

"WHILE I, UNAWARE OF THE DRAMA THAT HAD BEEN PLAYED OUT NEARBY, CONFRONTED THE SOURCE OF DEBORAH'S TERROR--"

YOU CANNOT HAVE THESE CHILDREN--THEY'RE UNDER MY PROTECTION NOW...

YOU'LL DO NO MORE HARM IN THIS PLACE UNLESS YOU STOP *ME* FIRST.!

YOUR MISTRESS WILL CONSIDER ME A FAR MORE VALUABLE PRIZE, I'M SURE...

...IF YOU CAN CATCH ME, THAT IS.!

"WITH THE COCKSURED-NESS INDICATIVE OF BOTH YOUTH AND EVIL, THE TRIO EAGERLY RESPONDED TO MY TAUNTS... BUT ONLY TWO WOULD RETURN THAT NIGHT!

7

"MEANWHILE, DEBORAH HAD ELUDED MISHKIN ONCE AGAIN, RUNNING ALONE THROUGH THE NIGHT'S DOWN-POUR UNTIL, EXHAUSTED AT LAST, SHE WASHED UP IN SAFE HARBOR.

THE KID'S ON A REAL BUMMER--ALL THAT STUFF ABOUT BLOOD AND DEATH...

PEACE NOT WAR

YEAH, SHE MUST'VE DROPPED SOME OF THAT BAD--

NOo! KEEP 'EM AWAY! DON'T LET THEM GET ME!

NO, NO--HEY, IT'S OKAY... IT'S OKAY... YOU'RE COMING DOWN NOW... IT NEVER HAPPENED...

NOTHING BAD'S GONNA HAPPEN HERE... THIS IS WOODSTOCK! LOOK AROUND YOU, HONEY --FEEL WHAT'S OUT THERE...

IT'S LOVE-- IT'S THE SPIRIT OF LOVE THAT'S HALF A MILLION STRONG!

PEACE-- NOT WAR

THAT'S RIGHT, SLEEP...SLEEP NOW AND IT'LL ALL BE OKAY.

"DEBORAH'S RESCUERS HAD DONE WELL, OVERCOMING HER TERROR WITH THE HELP OF THE GOOD SPIRIT AROUND THEM.

"THEY FELT SECURE IN LEAVING HER ALONE AS THEY MOVED CLOSER TO THE STAGE THAT NIGHT..."

OH, I GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS--

"..HAVING CONVINCED HER THAT HER NIGHTMARE EXPERIENCES HAD BEEN ONLY THAT--A DREAM...

"THEY WERE, OF COURSE, MISTAKEN..."

BUT, IF I IMAGINED IT, WHAT HAPPENED TO MY FRIENDS-- TO DAVE AND HOWIE-- AND CAROLYN--

--AND ADAM...

HERE WE ARE, DEBBIE.

8

YOU GUYS! I WAS SO WORRIED--I THOUGHT SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO YOU! I THOUGHT--

--THAT YOU WERE *DEAD!*

WE *ARE* DEAD, DEBBIE.

"AND AS DEBORAH'S JOY AT HER REUNION TURNED TO ICY DREAD..."

THIS *BENNETT'S* WRECKED THE WHOLE SCENE! WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GET MAYBE A COUPLE OF DOZEN NEW KIDS HERE...

INSTEAD WE GOT FOUR--AND *LOST* THAT MANY *EXPERIENCED VAMPIRES* IN THE PROCESS!

QUEEN MARY REALLY FIGURED HIM WRONG. SHE DIDN'T PREPARE US--

THEN PREPARE YOURSELVES NOW!

BENNETT!

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ANNOUNCED YOURSELF, MAN! NOT WHEN THE ODDS ARE TWO TO--

AARGH! MY FLESH-- BURNING--!

"THOUGH TWO NIGHTS OF RAIN HAD NOT WASHED AWAY HIS EVIL, MERE DROPS OF HOLY WATER STOPPED THE VAMPIRE IN HIS TRACKS...

"... ALLOWING MISHKIN TO FINISH THE WORK!"

NRAAARGH!

"AND THEN THERE WAS ONLY ONE BETWEEN ME AND MARY, MY HATED LOVER..."

NO, DON'T, I--I--

I NEVER WANTED TO BECOME LIKE THIS...

PLEASE-- END IT QUICKLY.

"WHETHER SUCH WAS REPENTENCE ENOUGH FOR THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS, I CANNOT SAY...

"BUT WE OBEYED THE PATHETIC CREATURE'S LAST REQUEST--

"-- THEN TURNED OUR ATTENTION TO HER UNHOLY MISTRESS, ONLY TO FIND HER--"

GONE!

10

"WHILE, ELSEWHERE--"

JOIN US, DEBBIE--IT'S WONDERFUL!

THERE'S POWER BEYOND YOUR DREAMS...ECSTASY WHEN YOU TASTE THE RICH, WARM BLOOD!

NO, THAT'S NOT YOU TALKING, CAROLYN... THOSE AREN'T THINGS YOU EVER WANTED!

DON'T YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU CAME TO WOODSTOCK FOR-- *ANY* OF YOU?

PEACE

LOOK AT THESE PEOPLE-- FEEL WHAT'S IN THE AIR!

THAT NO LONGER MATTERS TO US.

BUT IT'S GOT TO-- YOU'RE A *PART* OF IT! AND IT'S A PART OF YOU...

DAVID... HOWIE ...DON'T YOU FEEL IT? YOU *CAN'T* REJECT IT!

I... I CAN'T--

"THE MUSIC OF JIMI HENDRIX FILLED THE NIGHT--AND FILLED HALF A MILLION SOULS WITH ITS DRIVING CRESCENDOS...

"THE PSYCHIC POWER OF THIS SINGULAR MOMENT IN TIME ROSE AND SWELLED, BECOMING A TITANIC, CRASHING WAVE THAT WAS THE SPIRIT OF AN AGE!

"THOSE WHO SHARED THAT SPIRIT REJOICED IN THEIR EPIPHANY...

"WHILE FOUR YOUNG SOULS, LONGING TO JOIN IN BUT NO LONGER ABLE, DROWNED IN A SEA OF PEACE AND LOVE..."

EEEEYAAAHHHH

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, GIRL! BECAUSE OF YOU I HAVE FAILED HERE... AND FOR THAT YOU WILL PAY AND PAY AND PAY!

NO, MARY! YOU'LL LEAVE THE GIRL ALONE!

BATTLE ME IF YOU WISH -- AND WHEN THE DAWN COMES IT CAN TAKE US BOTH!

CURSE YOU, ANDREW! THIS GAME OF YOURS MUST END SOMEDAY!

"BUT IT WAS NO GAME -- AND SHE KNEW I WOULD GLADLY DIE A FINAL DEATH IF I COULD TAKE HER WITH ME...

"STILL, I DIDN'T PURSUE HER AS SHE FLEW INTO THE DARKNESS, BUT STAYED TO COMFORT THE INNOCENT CHILD WHO'D BEEN SO DEEPLY TOUCHED BY MARY'S EVIL...

"DEBORAH NEVER RETURNED HOME, BUT STAYED WITH ME AND MISHKIN, JOINING OUR CRUSADE...

"MONTHS AGO I'D LEFT THOSE TWO BEHIND ME, THINKING TO PROTECT THEM... INSTEAD I'D ONLY CUT MYSELF OFF FROM MY CLOSEST LINKS WITH HUMANITY.

"THE MEMORIES STIRRED BY THE MOVIE HAD MADE ME REALIZE HOW MUCH I MISSED THEM... NEEDED THEM... AND HOPED THEY'D STILL HAVE ME..."

DEBORAH... I'M COMING HOME.

SHOWIN

NEXT: RESOLUTIONS!

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY®

PRESENTS

I...Vampire!™

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M. McKALLITA

"OF ALL WHO LURK IN THE *DARK SHADOWS*, SHUNNED BY HUMANITY, THE *MOST* FEARED IS THE UNDEAD CREATURE CALLED THE *VAMPIRE!*

"I KNOW, FOR I AM *ONE OF THESE!*

"THERE ARE THOSE AMONG THE LIVING TOO WHO PLY THEIR TRADE IN THE TWILIT CORNERS OF THE WORLD...

"AND OFTEN SUCH MEN AND WOMEN --BY NATURE OR NECESSITY-- SEEM NOT THE LEAST PERTURBED BY TALES OF *NAMELESS NIGHTTIME TERROR...*

"THAT'S SOMETHING I'VE FOUND QUITE STRANGE --

"--SINCE IT IS THEY WHO SHOULD DREAD THEM THE MOST!"

THE THING IN THE TUNNELS

DAN MISHKIN & GARY COHN
WRITERS

ADRIAN GONZALES & TOM SUTTON
ARTISTS

TODD KLEIN
LETTERER

ADRIENNE ROY
COLORIST

KAREN BERGER,
EDITOR

CREATED BY J.M. DEMATTEIS

"I HAD RETURNED TO NEW YORK--TO THE HOME I SHARE WITH MY COMPANIONS ***DEBORAH DANCER*** AND ***DMITRI MISHKIN***-- AFTER A LONG ABSENCE.

"MY ONLY DESIRE HAD BEEN TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE ***VAMPIRIC CURSE*** I BORE ...

"BUT IN LEAVING THEM I'D LOST MY ONE ONGOING LINK WITH THE LIVING WORLD--A ***LIFELINE*** THAT ***NOURISHED*** MY WILL TO CARRY ON MY MISSION ..."

OH ANDREW, I THOUGHT YOU WERE ***NEVER*** COMING BACK TO US.

YOU NEEDN'T HAVE WORRIED...I SEEM TO KEEP TURNING UP IN YOUR LIFE LIKE A BAD PENNY.

DON'T SAY THAT! DESPITE... WHAT YOU ARE...THERE'S NOTHING ***BAD*** OR ***EVIL*** ABOUT YOU!

BUT WHAT I AM, DEBORAH--

--IS A VAMPIRE!

AND THE ONE TASK BEFORE ME IS TO END THE HORROR I UNLEASHED ON THE WORLD FOUR CENTURIES AGO --IN THE FORM OF ***MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD!***

AND I MAY HAVE FOUND THE PLACE FOR US TO BEGIN OUR WORK AGAIN, MY FRIEND...

YOU HEARD ABOUT THE SUBWAY ACCIDENT?

THE INVESTIGATORS ARE SPECULATING THAT THE CRASH RESULTED FROM THE SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE OF THE TRAINMAN!

YES, MISHKIN, BUT WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO--

AND THAT DISAPPEARANCE WAS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL IN RECENT DAYS.

DAILY POST

SUBWAY DISASTER!

8 DEAD, TRAINMAN MISSING

CANCER CURE EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONED

THE AUTHORITIES DON'T HAVE A CLUE WHO COULD BE RESPONSIBLE--BUT YOU AND I MIGHT GUESS, ANDREW...

YES--THE MANHATTAN SUBWAY SYSTEM, FOREVER HIDDEN FROM THE DAY, WOULD BE A PERFECT ENVIRONMENT FOR A VAMPIRE--

--OR A ***NEST*** OF THEM!

I'D BETTER SEE WHAT I CAN FIND DOWN THERE!

WE'LL GO WITH YOU.

NO, DEBORAH, THIS WILL ONLY BE RECONNAISSANCE... THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO JOIN ME.

"IN FACT IT WAS DEBORAH'S PROTECTION THAT WAS UPPERMOST IN MY MIND... BUT SHE INDULGED ME MY CONCERN...

"AND I SOON REACHED THE SCENE OF THE FATAL COLLISION.

"THE LINE HAD BEEN SHUT DOWN AND THE STATION CORDONED OFF TO KEEP AWAY THE MORBIDLY CURIOUS...

"BUT NEITHER ROPES NOR IRON GATES WERE ANY BARRIER TO ME!

"IN THE FORM OF MIST, I DRIFTED PAST THE WRECKAGE AND THE HUGE TRACK-CLEARING OPERATION WITHOUT DELAY--

"--KNOWING THAT MY QUARRY LAY BEYOND..."

MISHKIN MAY HAVE BEEN CORRECT IN HIS ASSUMPTIONS... IT'S COLD AND SILENT AS THE CRYPT IN THESE TUNNELS--

--A PLACE WHERE MOST VAMPIRES WOULD FEEL RIGHT AT HOME.

BUT HOW MANY VAMPIRES ARE *LEFT* IN THE CITY NOW?

INNOCULATION OF THE NEW *CANCER VACCINE* HAS MADE THE BLOOD OF MOST PEOPLE *POISONOUS* TO MY KIND!

I'VE BEEN ABLE TO SURVIVE ON MY USUAL SUPPLY OF *BOTTLED BLOOD*, BUT--

"MY QUESTIONS WERE LEFT UNFINISHED AND UNANSWERED AS I SAW THE PATH DIVERGE BEFORE ME."

3

A LIGHT IN THAT DIRECTION,,, WHO ELSE IS DOWN HERE?

"MY BAT WINGS SLICED THE AIR WITHOUT A SOUND AS I NEARED THE SLOWLY-MOVING LIGHT SOURCE,,,

"I WAS PREPARED TO MEET WHATEVER WAITED AHEAD--

"--WHETHER IT PROVED TO BE *FRIEND* OR *FOE!*"

THIS IS HIM ALL RIGHT! AND HIS BLOOD'S BEEN DRAINED DRY, AS THOUGH HE'S BEEN ATTACKED BY--

--A VAMPIRE?

WHO--!?

I'M A SEEKER OF ANSWERS,,,MY NAME IS ANDREW BENNETT.

MAGGIE CARLE,,,I'M A REPORTER FOR THE *DAILY POST*.

SO I GUESS YOU'? SAY WE'RE AFTER THE SAME THING--LOOKING FOR ANSWERS I MEAN,,,

,,,LIKE WHAT KILLED THE TRAINMAN AND LEFT HIS BODY A *BLOODLESS PULP!*

WHEN I ARRIVED YOU WERE ABOUT TO SPECULATE THAT THIS WAS THE WORK OF THE UNDEAD,,,

BUT THE CONDITION OF THE CORPSE TELLS A DIFFERENT TALE! A VAMPIRE SELDOM ***MAULS*** HIS VICTIMS SO.

THEN DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA WHAT ***DID*** KILL HIM?

I'M AFRAID NOT... BUT I MEAN TO FIND OUT!

AND CONSIDERING THE POSSIBLE ***DANGER*** INVOLVED, I'D ADVISE THAT YOU LEAVE AND LET ME FACE IT ALONE!

AND MISS OUT ON GETTING THIS STORY BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE? NOT ON YOUR LIFE, ANDY!

THAT WAS YOUR NAME, RIGHT? ANDY?

ANDREW, ACTUALLY--BUT CALL ME WHAT YOU LIKE, MISS CARLE.

MAKE IT MAGGIE.

"MAGGIE AND I WALKED ON THROUGH THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS SUBTERRANEAN WORLD--

"--FINDING NO CLUE TO THE SOURCE OF THE TRAINMAN'S FATE, UNTIL--"

SHH-- SOMEONE'S COMING...

LET'S KEEP OUR EYES OPEN! IF WE DON'T FIND HIM FIRST, ALL HELL'S GONNA BREAK LOOSE!

BUT WHO ARE THEY?

THE POLICE--? A ***SWAT*** TEAM PERHAPS?

THEY'RE NOT COPS! LOOK AT THEIR JACKETS...

5

THEY'RE FROM *BARR LABS*-- THE PEOPLE WHO DEVELOPED THE CANCER VACCINE!

BARR RESEARCH LABORATORIES

MAGGIE WOULDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE EFFECT OF THE CANCER CURE ON VAMPIRES... BUT IT'S POSSIBLE THE RESEARCHERS DO!

IF THEY'VE SENT A SECURITY TEAM TO INVESTIGATE *VAMPIRE-TYPE SLAYINGS*, THEN THE VACCINE'S POISONOUS EFFECT MAY BE MORE THAN MERE ACCIDENT!

WAIT HERE... I WANT TO SEE WHERE THEY'RE HEADING.

UH UH-- YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE WITHOUT M--

EEEIIEE!

MAGGIE!

HELLLP!

WHAT IN THE *WORLD* HAS GOT HOLD OF HER?! I CAN HARDLY MAKE IT OUT IN THE DARKNESS!

"DESPITE ITS BULK, THE CREATURE LOPED ACROSS THE TUNNEL CEILING WITH INCREDIBLE *SPEED* AND *AGILITY*...

"WITHOUT A DOUBT IT COULD HAVE OUTRACED A MAN...

"BUT I HAD *STOPPED* BEING A MAN FOUR HUNDRED YEARS EARLIER!

6

"AS I SWOOPED TOWARD THE BEAST, IT'S VAGUELY HUMAN FORM AND TATTERED CLOTHING STILL DISGUISED ITS *TRUE* NATURE FROM ME...

"BUT THERE WAS NO TIME NOW TO CAREFULLY SIZE UP MY FOE... IF I WISHED TO FREE MAGGIE AND GAIN ANY ANSWERS AT ALL THIS NIGHT--

"--I WOULD HAVE TO GO ON THE *ATTACK!*

"CLEARLY I HAD SURPRISED AND HURT THE CREATURE...

"BUT I FEARED THAT IN RESCUING POOR MAGGIE CARLE, I WAS ONLY GOING TO *ADD* TO HER *TERROR!*"

STAY WELL BACK, MAGGIE, BUT DON'T RUN OFF... YOU'D ONLY BE SUBJECTING YOURSELF TO *UNKNOWN RISKS!*

I'LL STOP THIS THING, *WHATEVER IT IS...*

...THOUGH IN A MANNER YOU MAY FIND SOMEWHAT *DISQUIETING!*

"IF THE YOUNG REPORTER GASPED AT THE SIGHT OF MY BARED FANGS, I DO NOT KNOW... FOR I COULD NOT HAVE HEARD HER OVER THE SOUND OF MY OWN DRAWN BREATH --

"ITS *SPIDERISH MANDIBLES* DRIPPED A COLORLESS OOZE, AND ITS EYES STARED UNBLINKINGLY...

"--AS ALL AT ONCE MY OPPONENT STOOD REVEALED TO ME!

"STILL I CONTINUED TO SENSE THAT IT HAD ONCE BEEN HUMAN--

"--THOUGH IN ITS PRESENT STATE IT MOCKED THE VERY *IDEA* OF HUMANITY!

"THE CREATURE LUNGED WITH *INSANE FURY*, AND I HALTED ITS CHARGE WITH MY OWN VAMPIRIC STRENGTH... BUT THEN WITH UNEXPECTED SUDDENNESS IT BORE DOWN UPON ME!

"I FELT ITS FETID BREATH ON MY NECK, AND NEXT--

AAGH!

"I KNEW IMMEDIATELY THAT IN BITING ME, THE SLAVERING THING HAD DEPOSITED ITS *VENOM*...

"AND STRUGGLE AS I MIGHT, I WAS SLOWLY BEING *OVERPOWERED!*

8

"YET THERE WAS ONE WHO, BY WIT OR INSTINCT--

"WAS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT I HAD NOT!"

WHAM!

IT'S DEAD!

THAT WAS EITHER SOME POWERFUL SWING OR THE CREATURE HAD A VERY SOFT SKULL!

I DON'T KNOW... THIS IS ALL A LOT MORE THAN I BARGAINED FOR--!

BUT I'VE COME THIS FAR ALREADY... AND I CAN'T IMAGINE IT GETTING WORSE!

IN THAT CASE, YOU MIGHT BE WISE TO LET YOUR *IMAG'NATION* CONTINUE IN ITS BLISSFUL *IGNORANCE*--

--BECAUSE I'M SURE THAT WORSE AWAITS US IN THE *HELL* THAT SPAWNED THIS MONSTROSITY...

BARR RESEARCH LABORATORIES

...EVEN IF THAT HELL IS *MAN-MADE!*

9

I DON'T UNDERSTAND! BARR LABS IS A *HIGHLY RESPECTED* INSTITUTION! HOW COULD THEY HAVE *CREATED* SUCH A--

WAIT--THAT LIGHT BEHIND US! *WHO...?!*

"THE SECURITY TEAM WE'D SEEN EARLIER--DOUBTLESS DRAWN BACK BY THE SOUNDS OF FIGHTING--STOOD POISED BEFORE US, WEAPONS AT THE READY...

"...AND THOUGH THEIR CHIEF'S WORDS WERE SPOKEN IN THE POLITEST OF TONES, HIS MEANING WAS *UNMISTAKEABLE...*"

ALL YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED, SIR--AND MA'AM--IF YOU'LL JUST COME ALONG WITH US!

AND I'D LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT YOU DO SO WITHOUT PROTEST OR SUDDEN MOVEMENTS...

...SINCE I'D REALLY *HATE* TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT *MIGHT HAPPEN OTHERWISE!*

TO BE CONTINUED!

10

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY PRESENTS

I... VAMPIRE!

ALL NEW! 60¢ | NO. 313 FEB.

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD! TODAY AN UNHOLY ORDER FOLLOWS HER EVIL DESIGNS, AND THE BLOOD THEY SPILL IS ON MY HANDS! THUS I MUST STOP HER...
...I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...VAMPIRE!™

"SIDE EFFECTS"

"A RASH OF SUBTERRANEAN SLAYINGS HAD SENT ME VAMPIRE HUNTING IN NEW YORK'S SUBWAY TUNNELS--BUT I WAS SOON TO FIND A MORE SINISTER WEB OF EVENTS THAN I HAD EXPECTED...

"THE GROTESQUE--AND AWESOMELY POWERFUL-- CREATURE THAT I DISCOVERED IN THE TUNNELS WAS BEING SOUGHT BY OTHERS AS WELL...

"...BY REPORTER MAGGIE CARLE, WHO HAD ALMOST BECOME ITS NEXT VICTIM...

"...AND BY A SECURITY TEAM FROM BARR RESEARCH LABS, THE DEVELOPERS OF A CANCER VACCINE THAT MADE HUMAN BLOOD POISONOUS TO VAMPIRES!

"WAS IT ONLY CHANCE THAT HAD BROUGHT ME TO THIS PLACE, I WONDERED... OR HAD FATE UNLOCKED THE DOOR?"

MISHKIN & COHN - writers · GONZALES & SUTTON - artists · ADAM KUBERT - letterer · ADRIENNE ROY - colorist · KAREN BERGER - editor · created by J.M. DeMATTEIS

I DON'T KNOW WHY THESE GOONS HAVE BROUGHT ME HERE, BUT I DEMAND TO SPEAK TO DR. BARR!

MY DEAR GIRL, YOU ARE LOOKING AT HIM.

WHAT!? BUT ALLEN BARR MUST BE NINETY YEARS OLD!

NINETY-THREE TO BE EXACT-- BUT I'VE MANAGED TO KEEP MYSELF FIT...

...AND STILL QUITE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CERTAIN PLEASURES.

YOU MAY ESCORT THE GENTLEMAN TO ONE OF THE CAGES ...I'LL DEAL WITH HIM LATER.

YOU HEARD THE MAN, PAL--GET MOVING!

"WITH MY VAMPIRIC POWER I COULD HAVE RESISTED...

"BUT I WAS STILL WEAKENED FROM THE BITE OF THE THING IN THE TUNNELS--

"--AND DECIDED NOT TO REVEAL MY ABILITIES UNTIL I HAD A BETTER SENSE OF WHAT WAS TRANSPIRING HERE..."

IN YA GO, MAC.

WAIT..YOU CAN AT LEAST TELL ME WHAT YOU PLAN TO DO WITH US.

BELIEVE ME, MISTER--

YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.

"HE WAS WRONG... THERE WERE A SCORE OF QUESTIONS DIGGING AT MY CONSCIOUSNESS--

"AND I WAS DETERMINED TO HAVE THE ANSWERS!

"MY PEN HAD BEEN BUILT TO HOLD A MAN, BUT I WAS SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN...

"AND IF I WAS TO BE CAGED LIKE A LABORATORY ANIMAL, IT SEEMED ONLY FITTING THAT I USE SUCH A FORM TO EFFECT MY ESCAPE!

"FOR AS A VAMPIRE I WAS NOT ONLY BROTHER TO THE WOLVES--

"--BUT TO THE VERMIN OF THE STREETS AS WELL..."

"AND WHICH FORM MORE CLOSELY RESEMBLES MY TRUE NATURE --

"I HAVE NEVER CARED TO SPECULATE.

"AS I EXPECTED, THE DOOR TO THE LABORATORY WAS UNLOCKED...

"...BUT NOT UNGUARDED--"

HEY! WHAT ARE YOU--

SILENCE! YOU CANNOT SPEAK...YOU CANNOT MOVE A MUSCLE UNLESS I COMMAND IT!

Nnghnn

"THOUGH I FIND IT DISTASTEFUL TO EMPLOY, THE POWER TO HYPNOTICALLY CONTROL MEN'S MINDS HAS BEEN OF USE TO ME AT TIMES..."

TELL ME WHAT BARR'S GAME IS ALL ABOUT...

IT'S OBVIOUS HIS MOTIVES ARE NOT ALTRUISTIC!

I--I DON'T KNOW... ONLY THAT THE CREATURE THAT ESCAPED INTO THE SUBWAY TUNNELS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE CANCER CURE--

--AND WITH BARR'S SECRET OF ETERNAL YOUTH.

WHAT ELSE?

THAT'S ALL I KNOW--EXCEPT...

A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO COME IN HERE DON'T GO OUT ALIVE!

"HE'D TOLD ME LITTLE MORE THAN I'D ALREADY SUSPECTED, AND PROBABLY ALL HE KNEW...

"AFTER GATHERING DIRECTIONS TO DR. BARR'S PERSONAL QUARTERS, I PLACED THE MAN IN POST-HYPNOTIC SLUMBER.

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"THE FAILURE OF MY INTERROGATION, BEAR FRUIT ONLY CONFIRMED THAT BARR HELD A DARK AND CLOSELY GUARDED SECRET--

"--THAT THE CURE FOR CANCER HAD NEVER BEEN HIS GOAL, BUT MERELY A SIDE EFFECT OF SOME TERRIBLE SCHEME HE HAD KEPT HIDDEN FROM THE WORLD!

"THE CORRIDORS WERE CURIOUSLY SILENT AND DEVOID OF ACTIVITY... THUS IT WAS WITH A START THAT I HEARD STRANGE SOUNDS EMITTING FROM A NEARBY ROOM...

HISSSSS

"I TURNED TO OPEN THE DOOR, DIVERTING MYSELF FROM THE TASK OF FINDING BARR AND FREEING MAGGIE--

SSSSSSSS

HP

"--BUT SOMEHOW INSTINCTIVELY KNOWING THAT A CLUE TO THE MYSTERY AWAITED WITHIN!

"AND WHILE I GAZED IN DISBELIEF AT DR. BARR'S ULTIMATE HORROR--

"MY FRIENDS DEBORAH DANCER AND DMITRI MISHKIN AWAITED MY RETURN, UNAWARE OF THE TURN MY EXPLORATION OF THE SUBWAYS HAD TAKEN..."

SHOULDN'T WE GO AFTER HIM? HE'S ONLY JUST COME BACK TO US AND NOW HE'S *DISAPPEARED* AGAIN!

LET'S GIVE HIM A LITTLE WHILE LONGER.

"...AND UNAWARE THAT THEY WERE EVEN NOW TAKING THEIR PLACES IN ANOTHER'S DEADLY GAME OF REVENGE!

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"BUT ALL THIS I DID NOT KNOW AS I STOOD MUTE, FILLED WITH SHOCK AND REVULSION--

"--BEFORE THE CAGED CREATURES THAT HAD CLEARLY ONCE BEEN MEN, BUT WERE NOW IN VARIOUS STAGES OF TRANSFORMATION TO A BIZARRE, SPIDER-LIKE STATE!

"THE ESCAPED BEASTS I'D FOUGHT IN THE TUNNELS HAD BEEN ONE OF THESE... BUT WHAT WAS BARR'S PURPOSE IN CREATING THEM?

"I RESOLVED TO FIND THE ANSWERS, AND THEN--

KELLP--

HELP ME--PLEASE, BY ALL THAT'S HOLY...

"HOLY I WAS NOT, BUT I ANSWERED THE CALL--"

I'LL HELP YOU IF I CAN, BUT TELL ME--WHY HAS BARR DONE THIS TO YOU?

BECAUSE WE... WE ARE THE CANCER CURE!

"I HAD NO TIME TO REPLY, AS--"

COME ALONG NOW...

LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!

BELIEVE ME, SIMON, I'M AS *ANXIOUS* AS YOU TO GET THIS OVER WITH!

"TURNING TO MIST, I DRIFTED TO THE CEILING...

"...OBSERVING AS THEY REMOVED ONE OF THE PATHETIC CREATURES FROM THE CAGE--

"--AND TURNED THEIR DEAF EARS TO HIS INHUMAN SQUEALING..."

THAT'S GOT HIM... YOU WANT US TO TAKE HIM TO THE *EXTRACTOR?*

YES... THE EXTRACTOR.

"AND SHORTLY--"

THIS ONE WILL PRODUCE ENOUGH SERUM TO INNOCULATE A *MILLION* PEOPLE, SO SPARE ME YOUR *SUNDAY SCHOOL MORALITY!*

DON'T TELL ME THAT THE LIFE OF ONE *SKID ROW BUM* IS WORTH MORE THAN THE *BENEFIT* THE VACCINE WILL BRING!

6

BESIDES, IT'S *FAR* TOO LATE FOR DOUBTS NOW... THIS ISN'T THE FIRST ONE WE'VE *DRAINED*!

YES, I-- SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.

THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS, ISN'T THAT IT?

YOU CAN DRAIN A MAN'S *LIFE FLUIDS* FOR YOUR OWN SURVIVAL?!

WHAT MONSTROUS EVIL!

WHO THE DEVIL--?

"I WAS UNABLE TO CONTROL MY OUTRAGE. THEIR CALLOUS DISREGARD FOR A SINGLE HUMAN LIFE-- THEIR PRETENSE OF SERVING A SO-CALLED HIGHER GOOD--

"--DROVE ME *WILD WITH RIGHTEOUS FURY!*"

WHAT *IS IT* THAT YOU'VE DONE TO THESE *POOR WRETCHES*?!

THE--THE DISTILLED VENOM FROM A RARE VARIETY OF SOLIFUGID-- WHEN MIXED WITH CERTAIN CHEMICALS-- TRANSFORMS THEM INTO THE *SPIDER CREATURES*...

AND THE SERUM DERIVED FROM *THEM* SOMEHOW PROTECTS THE HUMAN BODY FROM CANCER--!

--AND AT THE SAME TIME MAKES THE BLOOD OF THOSE INNOCULATED *TOXIC TO VAMPIRES!*

NO WONDER THE BITE I SUSTAINED FROM THE ESCAPED CREATURE WEAKENED ME!

"IN TRUTH, I *STILL* FELT THE VENOM COURSING THROUGH MY BODY...AND KNEW THAT IT WAS SLOWLY *POISONING ME!*

"NONE OF BARR'S *UNDERLINGS* HELD ANY MORE ANSWERS FOR ME...

7

"ONLY ALLEN BARR HIMSELF POSSESSED THE FINAL KEY TO THE RIDDLE OF THE CANCER CURE..."

STOP!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HER!?

EH? HOW DID YOU ESCAPE?

NO MATTER--YOU MAY HAVE COME THIS FAR, BUT IT WILL DO YOU NO GOOD IN THE END!

AND AS FOR WHAT I'M DOING, IT IS ONLY THAT WHICH I MUST IN ORDER TO SURVIVE...

I AM GOING TO DRINK HER BLOOD!

A VAMPIRE! THAT EXPLAINS YOUR INHUMAN TREATMENT OF THOSE POOR DERELICTS...

...BUT NOT WHY YOU WOULD DEVELOP A CANCER CURE FATAL TO YOUR OWN KIND!

MY OWN KIND--BAH! I HAVE NO KINSHIP WITH OTHER VAMPIRES!

THAT IS WHY I DRAIN MY VICTIMS MECHANICALLY--SO THAT THEY DON'T BECOME VAMPIRES WHO WILL ONLY BE MORE COMPETITION FOR ME!

IF EACH NEW VAMPIRE CREATES OTHERS, THERE COULD SOON BE MORE PREDATORS THAN PREY!

IT WAS TO MY ADVANTAGE TO BE THE ONLY VAMPIRE ON EARTH, AND I USE MY SCIENTIFIC GENIUS TO FIND A WAY TO ERADICATE THE REST!

8

"AS WE CAME TO BLOWS, I BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND BARR'S SCHEME..."

THEN THE CANCER CURE WAS ONLY A *SIDE EFFECT* OF YOUR PLAN TO DESTROY OTHER VAMPIRES!

YOU FOOL, THERE WAS *NEVER* ANY CANCER CURE-- EXCEPT FOR A FEW SELECT LAB ANIMALS!

IT WAS ALL A MASSIVE *HOAX*, CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED, TO DISSEMINATE MY *ANTI-VAMPIRE TOXIN* THROUGH-OUT THE WORLD!

AND HOW DID *YOU* EXPECT TO SURVIVE?

I DEVELOPED AN ANTIDOTE, OF COURSE--

--AN ANTIDOTE I'LL USE AGAIN SOME DAY TO PROVIDE MYSELF WITH AN ETERNAL MATE!

WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO *POSSESS* THIS, MY FRIEND?

HOW HARD HAVE YOU STRUGGLED TO OBTAIN FRESH BLOOD--UNTAINTED BY THE TOXIN--TO SLAKE YOUR *NEVER-ENDING THIRST*?

AND IF MY GUARDS WERE CORRECT, YOU WERE *BITTEN* BY THE ESCAPED MAN-SPIDER!

HAS THE VENOM BEGUN TO BURN LIKE *HELLFIRE* IN YOUR VEINS?

ARE YOU PREPARED TO *DIE* FOR THE *FINAL* TI--

AIEEE

MAGGIE! YOU'RE FREE... BUT--

HOW DID I MANAGE TO GET OUT OF THE RESTRAINTS?

IT'S NO PROBLEM, ANDY...

...WHEN YOU CAN TURN YOURSELF INTO A MIST.

NOT YOU TOO--?

MAGGIE CARLE--GIRL REPORTER AND GIRL VAMPIRE--AT YOUR SERVICE!

I'VE KNOWN YOUR GAL *MARY* FOR QUITE A FEW YEARS...AND WHILE YOU TWO WERE *TIME-TRIPPING* TO ESCAPE THE *TOXIN'S EFFECTS*--

"SOME OF US WERE PIECING TOGETHER BITS OF THE TRUTH ABOUT THE "CANCER CURE" SCAM--AND LOOKING FOR A WAY TO DEVELOP AN ANTIDOTE!"

DR. BARR SAVED US A FEW STEPS BY COMING UP WITH ONE ALREADY.

GO AHEAD AND TAKE THIS VIAL FOR YOURSELF, ANDY...I'VE GOT ANOTHER FOR THE *BLOOD RED MOON'S* SCIENTISTS TO DUPLICATE.

JUST DON'T TELL MARY I GAVE IT TO YOU WITHOUT A FIGHT...SHE'S NOT SOMEBODY I'D LIKE TO HAVE MAD AT ME!

BYE CUTIE.

"THE WALLS OF THE FACILITY CAME TOPPLING DOWN AROUND ME AS THE FIRE BARR AND I HAD STARTED TURNED THE PLACE INTO HIS TOMB!

"I QUICKLY DOWNED THE ANTI-TOXIN--

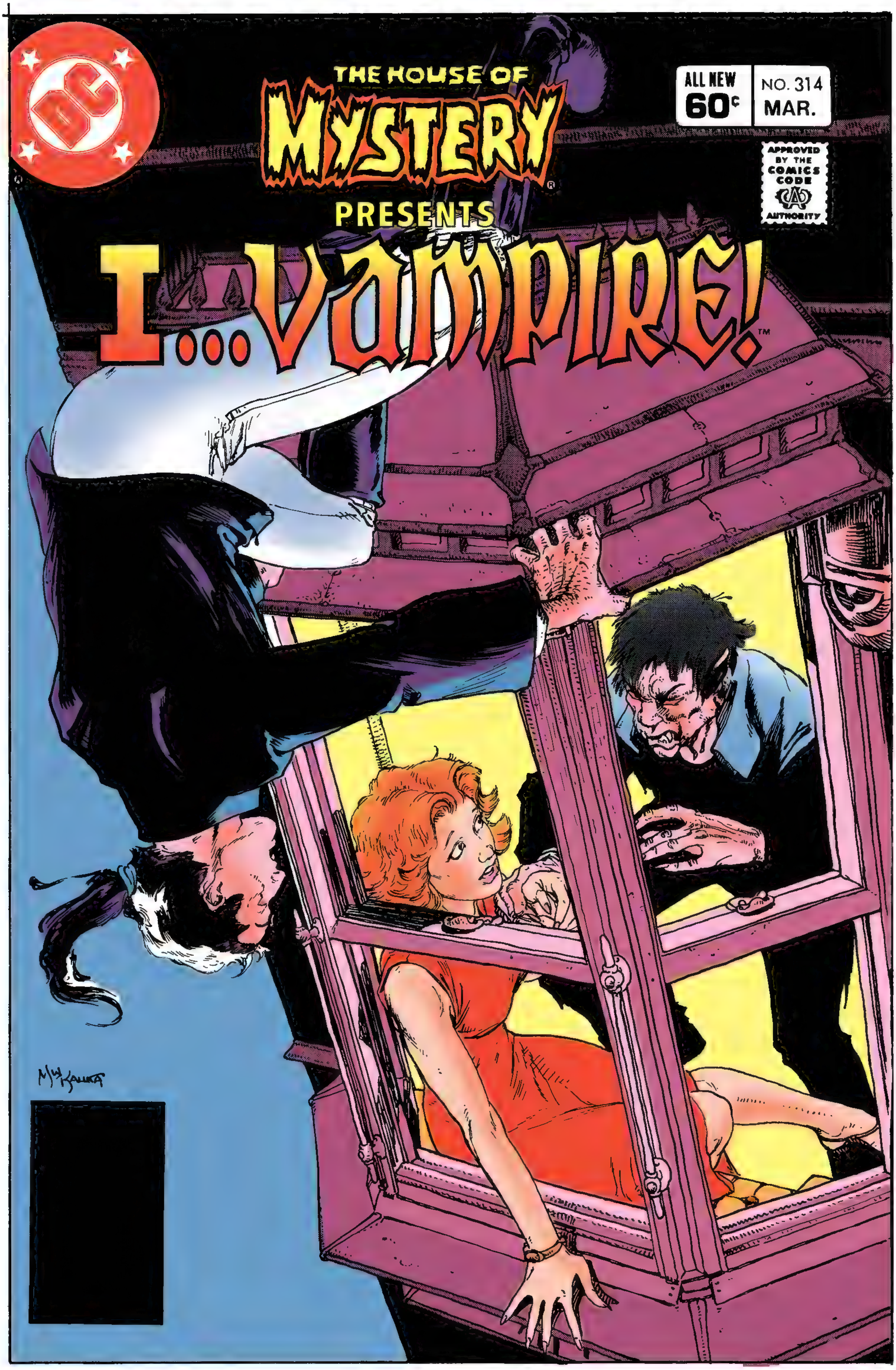
"--WONDERING WHY AN ALLY OF MARY'S HAD GIVEN ME THE CHANCE TO CONTINUE MY WAR AGAINST THE BLOOD RED MOON!

"THEN, AS I QUIT THE CRUMBLING EDIFICE, I SMELLED THE BURNING HUSKS OF THE SPIDER-THINGS...

"I LISTENED TO THEIR HIGH-PITCHED SHRIEKS AND WAILS AS FLAMING DEATH CONSUMED THEM...

"AND I SWORE THAT THE WAR WOULD GO ON!"

THE END.


THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY®
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M/H KALUTA

"WHEN THIS CENTURY WAS YOUNG, I HUNTED THE VILE CREATURES WHOSE VAMPIRIC CABAL WAS CALLED THE BLOOD RED MOON...

"THE POWER OF GOOD, I BELIEVED, MUST ULTIMATELY VANQUISH THEIR UNDYING EVIL!

"BUT I WAS SOON TO LEARN TO SAVOR THE TASTE OF EVIL -- AND OF BLOOD -- AND NOW THE ONLY TASTE I HUNGER FOR IS A SWEET MORSEL OF REVENGE!

AWAY, OLD MAN -- AND BE GRATEFUL I LET YOU LIVE!

"AT LAST THE TIME HAS COME, AND I WILL TRIUMPH OVER MY LOATHSOME ENEMY!

"I, EDWARD TRANE..."

DEBORAH! MY GOD!

TELL BENNETT IF HE WANTS THE GIRL, HE WILL HAVE TO COME TO ME!

"AND THEN REVENGE WILL BE MINE..."

I...Vampire!™

DAN MISHKIN + GARY COHN STORY • TOM SUTTON ART • BEN ODA ADRIENNE LETTERS COLORS • KAREN BERGER EDITOR

Created by J.M. DeMATTEIS

SHALL I TAKE YOUR LIFE NOW, MISS DANCER? WOULD YOUR DEATH SCREAMS PROVIDE THE PUNISHMENT ANDREW BENNETT DESERVES?

NO... I THINK NOT.

YOU WON'T SEE MY IMAGE ON THIS FILM, BENNETT, BUT YOU KNOW WHO I AM -- WHAT *YOU* MADE ME!

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? ANDREW WOULDN'T--

BAH! YOU BELIEVE HIS RIDICULOUS POSTURE OF VIRTUOUSNESS...

...AND ALL THE WHILE HE USES YOU AS PAWN AND PLAYTHING!

STUPID GIRL!

BUT ONCE *I* ADMIRED HIM TOO-- IN THE DAYS BEFORE HE ENGINEERED MY *UTTER RUINATION*...

"I MET HIM IN LONDON, SEVENTY YEARS AGO, WHEN ONE HORRIFYING ENCOUNTER PROVED TO ME THAT VAMPIRES WERE NO MERE LEGEND..

"BENNETT SEEMED TO BE MY SAVIOR--AND AS A BOLD YOUTH, EAGER FOR ADVENTURE, I OFFERED MY SERVICES TO HIS CAUSE...

"THE PLAN WAS FOR ME TO FIND A PLACE AMONG THE BLOOD RED MOON --

"--AS ONE OF THEIR WRETCHED HUMAN SERVANTS...

"...BUT I WAS SOON DISCOVERED TO BE BENNETT'S SPY!"

2

"HE CAME FOR ME, FEARING NO DOUBT THAT I WOULD **DIVULGE** HIS OWN SECRETS--

"--BUT HE WAS OVERCOME BY THE SUPERIOR NUMBER OF HIS RIVALS!

"THEY KEPT HIM PRISONER FOR DAYS, UNTIL **RAVENING** BLOODLUST WAS ALL THAT DROVE HIM...

"THEN THEY GAVE HIM ME!

"HIS **WILD-EYED** EXPRESSION IS THE LAST THING I REMEMBER--

"--UNTIL I AROSE THREE DAYS LATER..."

...AS A *VAMPIRE!*

I SEE THAT YOU STILL DO NOT BELIEVE ME -- BUT YOU WILL...

"...WHEN HE COMES FOR YOU!"

DEBORAH! THANK GOODNESS I FOUND YOU IN *TIME!*

WHATEVER EDWARD HAD IN MIND FOR YOU, HE'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH *ME* FIRST!

=MMMF=

DON'T WORRY, DEBORAH -- I'LL HAVE YOU FREE IN A MOMENT...

3

BUT ANDREW, IT'S--

--A TRAP!

KRRRRM

SLAM!

NOW I'VE GOT YOU WHERE I WANT YOU, BENNETT!

NOW WE SHALL TEST THE NOBLE VAMPIRE'S CLAIM THAT HE WILL *NEVER* TAKE A HUMAN LIFE!

EDWARD, YOU'VE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!

SO I DID--ON THE DAY I BEGAN TO BELIEVE YOUR LIES...

"EVEN AFTER I ROSE FROM THE DEAD I CLUNG TO THAT BELIEF-- UNABLE TO CREDIT MY LAST LIVING RECOLLECTION! AND EMULATING YOU, I SLAKED MY OBDURATE THIRST WITHOUT KILLING.

MERCY HOSPITA

"I SOUGHT YOU OUT, HOPING FOR SOME GUIDANCE, SOME EXPLANATION --

"YOU HAD QUIT LONDON--OR WERE AVOIDING ME--AND AS LONELY NIGHTS TURNED INTO WEEKS AND MONTHS, IT BECAME *HARDER* AND *HARDER* TO RESIST THE BLOODLUST!

"--ONLY TO FIND YOUR HOUSE HAD BEEN BURNED TO THE GROUND.

"THEN ONE NIGHT I TOOK MY FIRST VICTIM--AND I SAVORED THE RICH, WARM TASTE OF BLOOD, FELT THE *ANIMALISTIC EXHILARATION* OF THE PREDATOR.

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"SOON THERE WAS NO RESISTING -- MY DEBASEMENT WAS COMPLETE! AND I REALIZED THAT NO ONE COULD WITHSTAND THE VAMPIRIC CONDITION AND MAINTAIN HIS HUMANITY... NOT EVEN ANDREW BENNETT!

"ONLY ON ONE POINT WAS I RESOLUTE: I STAKED MY VICTIMS RATHER THAN LET THEM BECOME VAMPIRES!

"BUT OH HOW I HATED MYSELF FOR WHAT I HAD BECOME -- AND HOW I DESPISED THE ARCHITECT OF MY MISERY...

"THOUGHTS OF REVENGE WERE ALL THAT GAVE PURPOSE TO MY UNDEAD EXISTENCE!

"AND THOUGH I RECEIVED NO HELP FROM THE VAMPIRES WHO REMEMBERED ME AS YOUR ALLY, I SWORE I'D LOCATE YOU..."

...AND EXPOSE YOUR CHARADE ONCE AND FOR ALL!

YOU WILL BETRAY MISS DANCER -- EVEN AS YOU BETRAYED ME -- WHEN THE THIRST BECOMES TOO GREAT! THEN YOU WILL *BOTH* BE VAMPIRES...

...AND I WILL WATCH AS YOU GO MAD WITH YOUR BLOODLUST TOGETHER!

"HE SAYS NOT A WORD -- BUT SEEMS TO STARE AT ME THROUGH THE ONE WAY GLASS...

"VERY WELL, LET HIM PUT ON SUPERIOR AIRS, FOR HIS COMPOSURE WILL SHATTER SOON ENOUGH...

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"...AS THE DAMNED BLOOD CRAVING WELLS UP IN HIS SOUL..."

ANDREW, IT'S BEEN TWO NIGHTS... ARE YOU--

DO NOT SPEAK, DEBORAH...

THE VERY SOUND OF YOUR VOICE-- SUMMONS UP MY TERRIBLE THIRST...!

"GOOD, BENNETT-- LET HER COMFORT YOU... IT WILL ONLY HASTEN THE MOMENT WHEN YOU SINK YOUR FANGS INTO HER WARM AND TENDER FLESH!

"I, TOO, SHARED FORBIDDEN LOVE WITH A NORMAL WOMAN--A LOVE THAT ENDED IN FUTILITY...

"I MADE HER A VAMPIRE SO THAT WE COULD SPEND ETERNITY TOGETHER...

"...BUT SHE WAS LURED AWAY BY THE BLOOD RED MOON, WHOSE MEMBERS SHUNNED ME STILL.

"ONCE AGAIN I WAS LEFT ALONE WITH ONLY BITTER MEMORIES...

"...KNOWING AT LAST THAT EVERY-ONE BETRAYS YOU --AND LOVE IS NEVER TRUE.

"TAKE HER THEN, ANDREW BENNETT-- BETRAY YOUR WOMAN AS YOU DID ME..."

ANDREW, THIS IS SHEER TORTURE FOR YOU! IF MY BLOOD WOULD EASE YOUR AGONY...

NO-- NEVER! NEVER!

6

"WHY DOES HE CONTINUE THIS SHAM? HE HASN'T FED FOR THREE NIGHTS NOW!

"AND THE WOMAN REFUSES TO EAT, CHOOSING TO SHARE HIS SUFFERING IN HER WAY...

"BUT THERE'S NO REASON WHY I SHOULD DENY MY OWN THIRST... MY STOCKPILE OF BOTTLED BLOOD WILL FAR OUTLAST BENNETT'S WILLPOWER! AND WHILE I WATCH IN WELL-STAYED REPOSE, THAT DECEIVER WILL --

WHOLE BLOOD

WHOLE BLOOD

RAARRGH!

BENNETT! NO!

THIS CANNOT BE! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!?

IT-TT WAS THE ONLY WAY... THERE WAS NO OTHER CHOICE...

I KILLED HIM!

CURSE YOU, WOMAN, YOU'VE CHEATED ME OF MY VENGEANCE! AND FOR THAT--

--YOU WILL DIE A SLOW AND HORRIBLE DEATH!

7

YOU'RE *DERANGED*, EDWARD! THE CURSE OF VAMPIRISM HAS MADE YOU A FOOL!

WHAT!? YOU WERE TRYING TO GULL ME, WERE YOU?

BUT THAT ONLY MEANS I STILL HAVE MY *REVENGE!*

DID YOU REALLY HOPE THAT YOU COULD DEFEAT ME AFTER BEING *STARVED* FOR THREE DAYS? NOW WHO'S THE *FOOL?*

I'D HAVE PREFERRED TO BRING ABOUT YOUR END AS I PLANNED, BENNETT, BUT THIS WAY WILL SUFFICE -- AND IT WILL BE BY MY HAN--

ARRRGH!

ANDREW--?

IT'S OVER NOW, DEBORAH -- THANKS TO YOU.

H-HOW, BENNETT... HOW...?

GOOD LORD, HE'S STILL--

HOW DID YOU *RESIST* THE BLOOD LUST-- FOR *HER*... WHEN YOU SO READILY TURNED ON ME -- ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...?

EDWARD... EDWARD, I NEVER BETRAYED YOU! IT WAS THE AGENTS OF THE BLOOD RED MOON WHO MADE YOU A VAMPIRE!

"WHEN THEY DROPPED YOU INTO MY PRISON I LEAPED TOWARD THE TRAPDOOR! THAT MUST BE WHAT YOU SAW JUST BEFORE UNCONSCIOUSNESS CLAIMED YOU...

"WITH THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE IN MY FAVOR I LAID MY KEEPERS LOW--

"--AND I SOUGHT AN ESCAPE ROUTE FOR BOTH OF US... BUT IN THE END THEY WERE TOO MANY FOR ME...

"I BARELY MANAGED TO GET FREE MYSELF!

"THOUGH I RETURNED FOR YOU AS SOON AS I WAS ABLE, YOU WERE GONE BY THEN..!"

AND OVER THE YEARS MY ENEMIES TAUNTED ME WITH CONFLICTING TALES OF YOUR AWFUL DEMISE--

--AND I FINALLY ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT YOU HAD PERISHED...

BUT I WAS WRONG.

9

N-NO... NO, YOU'RE LYING! YOU HAD TO HAVE DONE IT--! I NEED IT TO HAVE BEEN YOU...

IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE *YOU* SUCCUMBED TO THE UNGODLY TEMPTATIONS OF UNDEATH THAT MY OWN FALL COULD BE JUSTIFIED...

BUT--YOU NEVER DID HARM ME, DID YOU?

I FEAR I'VE LEFT A TRAIL OF BROKEN LIVES IN MY WAKE THESE PAST FOUR CENTURIES, EDWARD--

--BUT THE ONLY ONE I'VE EVER MADE A VAMPIRE WAS MY BELOVED MARY.

FORGIVE ME, ANDREW... PLEASE FORGIVE--ME...

"ABSOLUTION, I KNEW, WAS NOT MINE TO OFFER--JUST AS EDWARD'S SALVATION WAS HIS ALONE TO EARN...

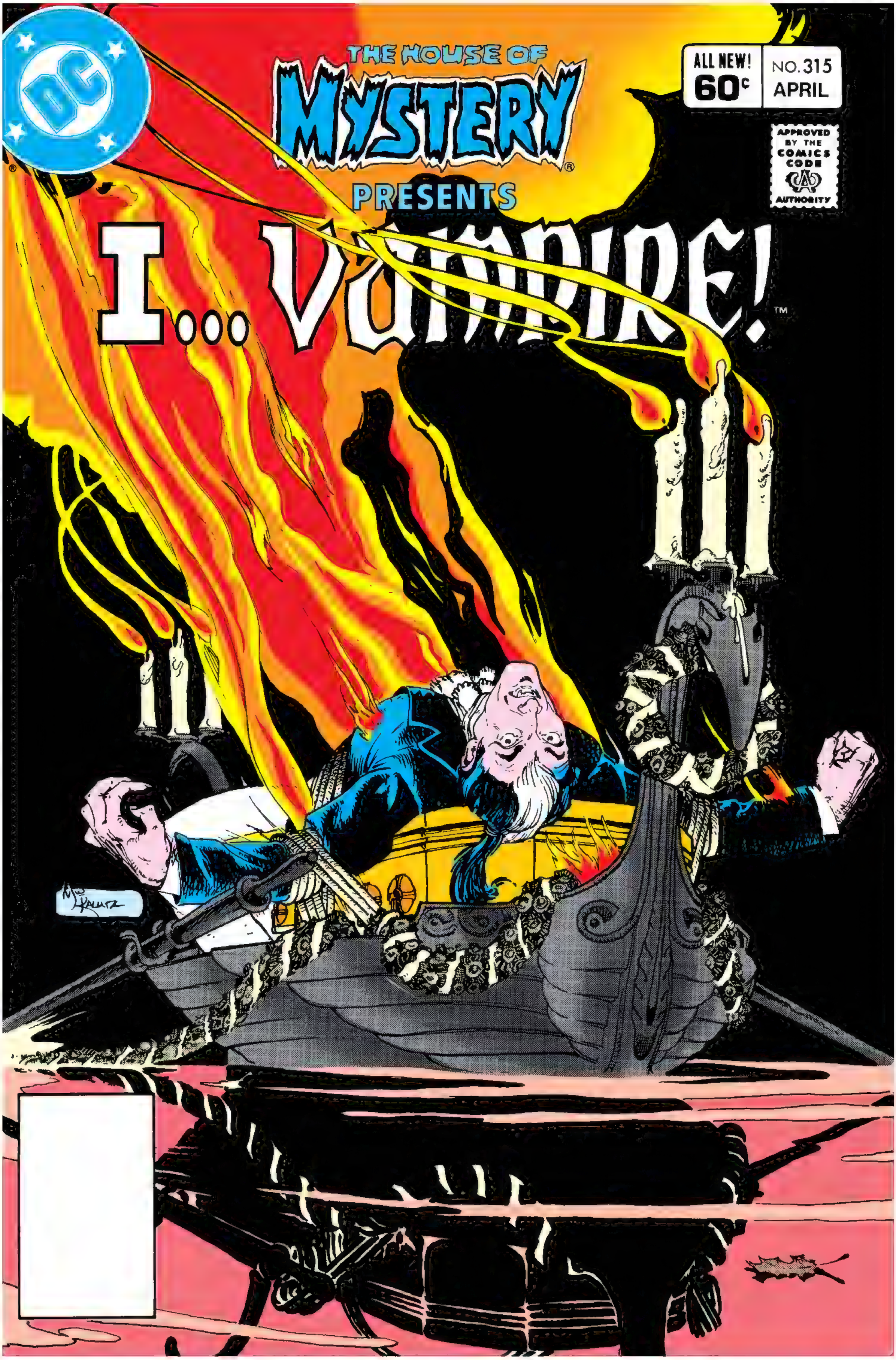
"FOR IN THE FINAL TALLY, EVEN A VAMPIRE MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS OWN DEEDS--OR MISDEEDS...

"WITH ENOUGH WILL AND FAITH AND LOVE OF LOST HUMANITY, EDWARD TRANE MIGHT HAVE RESISTED HIS AWFUL CURSE...

"AND SOMETIMES DARK HOURS WERE ALL I EVER KNEW...

"INDEED IT WAS LOVE, ABOVE ALL, THAT SUSTAINED ME THROUGH MY DARKEST HOURS--

"I, ANDREW BENNETT... I...VAMPIRE!"


THE HOUSE OF
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M. Kaluta

"THE LONE BAT THAT SILENTLY SWOOPED OUT OF THE DARKNESS AND DOWN TOWARD THE TENT CITY SURROUNDING THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT--

"--WAS I...!

"THE PLACE SEEMED STRANGELY QUIET, IN LIGHT OF THE FERVENT ACTIVITY GOING ON NEARBY AT THIS GATHERING OF THE SO-CALLED 'AMERICAN CRUSADE'...

"...ALTHOUGH CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES-- AND MY SUSPICIONS--

"--IT WAS PERHAPS NOT SO STRANGE AFTER ALL..."

DEBORAH...?

"SUDDENLY THE TENT'S DARK INTERIOR WAS FILLED WITH BLINDING LIGHT, AND I RECOILED AS I SENSED THE SWARM CONVERGING ON ME--

"AND I KNEW AT ONCE THAT THEIR SHEER NUMBER WOULD OVERWHELM ME...

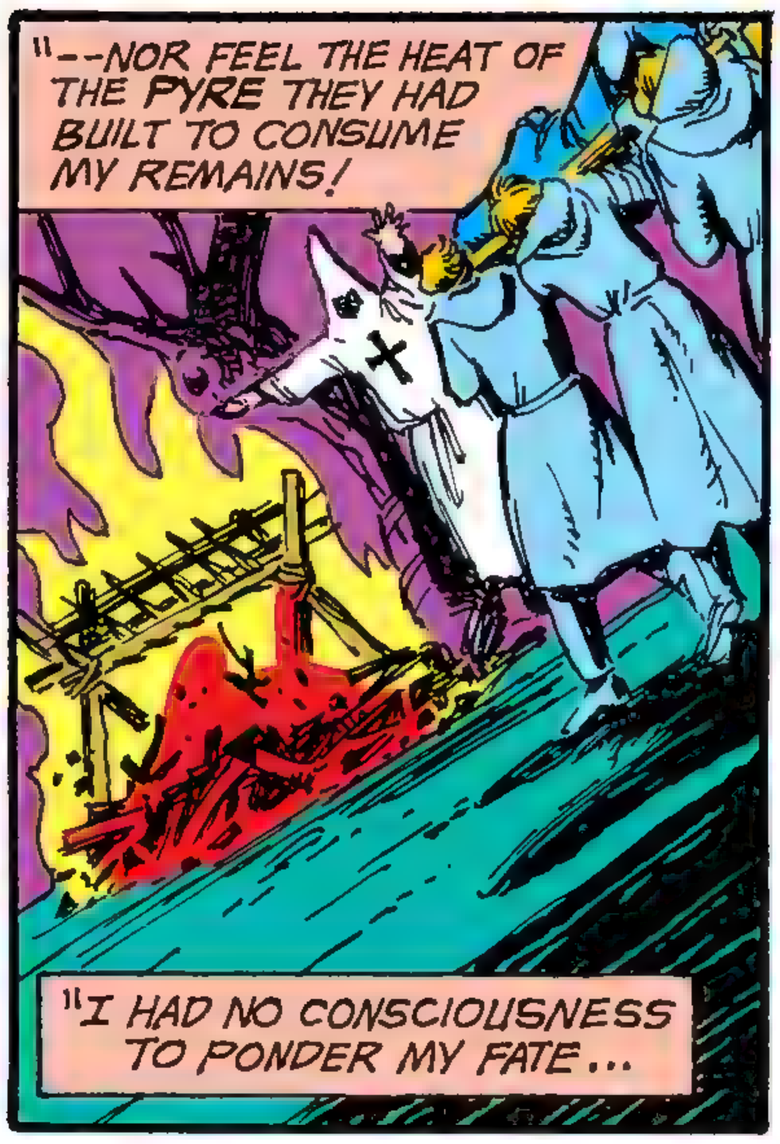
"...KNEW THAT I WAS IRREVOCABLY, IRRETRIEVABLY TRAPPED..."

WE'VE GOT YOU NOW, HELLSPAWN!

"...KNEW THAT I WAS ABOUT--

"--TO DIE!

"THEN, UNANIMATED EITHER BY LIFE OR UNDEATH, I SENSED NOTHING OF WHAT TRANSPIRED AFTER...
"I DID NOT HEAR THEIR HOSANNAHS AS THEY BORE ME AWAY--



I...Vampire!™

DAN MISHKIN & GARY COHN writers | PARIS CULLINS & TOM SUTTON artists | JUN ROY TALACTAC letterer | ADRIENNE ROY colorist | KAREN BERGER editor | created by J. M. DeMATTEIS

"BUT IT WAS AT ANOTHER MONUMENT TO AMERICA'S FIRST PRESIDENT THAT THIS ADVENTURE HAD BEGUN, IN NEW YORK'S GREENWICH VILLAGE...

"WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK WAS, AS USUAL, ASWIRL WITH THE ACTIVITY OF THE CITY'S MANY AND VARIED NIGHT PEOPLE...

"ALTHOUGH ONE GROUP WAS CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT..."

FUNNY, I DON'T SEE ANY COPS AROUND.

THEY SHOULDN'T BE SO LAX... AROUND HERE IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH FOR THINGS TO GET--

--OUT OF HAND...?

"DEBORAH'S READING OF THE SITUATION HAD BEEN ASTUTE...

"THE PARK WAS INVADED FROM ALL SIDES, AS IF THIS WERE A MILITARY CAMPAIGN..."

TAKE THAT, YOU FILTHY SINNER!

"...OR MORE ACCURATELY-- A CRUSADE!

"THERE WERE SOME WHO WELCOMED THE BRAWL -- WHO SHARED THE ATTACKERS' BRUTAL PLEASURE...

"OTHERS, LIKE MYSELF AND MY TWO COMPANIONS, ONLY FOUGHT--

"--TO MAKE OUR WAY FREE!

"DMITRI MISHKIN AND I, WHO HAD SEEN SUCH INCIDENTS BEFORE, STOOD SILENTLY... BUT DEBORAH DANCER ASKED--"

WHO ARE THEY? AND WHERE ARE THE POLICE?!

IN THE RUSSIA OF MY YOUTH, THE REGULAR POLICE WOULD ALWAYS FADE AWAY...

...JUST BEFORE THE COSSACKS CAME!

"THE FIGHTING DIED DOWN AS A SOUNDTRUCK ROLLED INTO THE PARK--AND SOON ALL WHO REMAINED WERE LISTENING TO A VOICE THEY'D HEARD SO OFTEN ON THE EVENING NEWS...

"THE VOICE OF THE REVEREND EDGAR WARNOCK-- FOUNDER, LEADER AND INSPIRATION OF THE AMERICAN CRUSADE!"

I TELL YOU THAT AMERICA HAS TURNED TO SIN...

AND A GREAT NATION TURNED TO *WICKEDNESS* IS AN *OFFENSE* UNTO THE LORD!

BUT WE WILL CHANGE AMERICA'S COURSE! WE WILL BRING HER BACK TO THE PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!

WE WILL GO TO WASHINGTON, D.C. AND SHOW THEM *HIS* MIGHTY RIGHT ARM!

COME WITH US AND *RENOUNCE* YOUR *SINS*!

MARCH WITH US TO VICTORY!

I KNEW THESE CRUSADERS WERE *ZEALOTS*, BUT I HAD NO IDEA HOW VIOLENT THEY WERE --OR HOW BRAZEN!

...LIKE THE *BROWN SHIRTS* IN GERMANY YEARS AGO.

IF YOU REALLY THINK THAT, THEN WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!

NO, DEBORAH, THIS IS NOT OUR FIGHT.

WE ARE DEDICATED TO STOPPING THE *VAMPIRIC MENACE* OF THE *BLOOD RED MOON*--AND NO MATTER HOW LOATHSOME *THESE* PEOPLE ARE, THEY ARE NOT--

--*VAMPIRES*, ANDREW? IS THE WOMAN WHO STANDS WITH WARNOCK NOW *NOT* A VAM-PIRE?

IS THAT NOT THE VERY VAMPIRE I HAVE SOUGHT SINCE CHILD-HOOD? IS THAT NOT...

...MY *MOTHER*?

"INDEED SHE WAS..!"

"AND TO PROBE THEIR CONNECTION TO THE BLOOD RED MOON, DEBORAH WENT THE NEXT DAY TO THE NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS OF THE AMERICAN CRUSADE..."

I HEARD REVEREND WARNOCK LAST NIGHT... AND I WAS REALLY MOVED BY WHAT HE SAID!

AND SO YOU WISH TO JOIN US... VERY GOOD.

TAKE HER TO INDOCTRINATION.

"INDOCTRINATION CONSISTED OF INTERROGATION AND RUDIMENTARY **BRAIN-WASHING** TECHNIQUES--NOTHING DEBORAH WAS **UNPREPARED** FOR.

"IF THEY **WERE** TESTING HER IN SOME WAY, SHE PASSED--AND WAS TOLD THAT IT WOULD BE HER SPECIAL HONOR--

"--TO HAVE AN AUDIENCE WITH THE REVEREND WARNOCK THAT VERY NIGHT..."

LEAVE US, IF YOU WILL, OGILVIE. I WANT TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH THE YOUNG LADY.

YES, MY DEAR, THEY WERE RIGHT TO BRING YOU TO ME...

YOU ARE PRECISELY WHAT I HAVE BEEN *LOOKING* FOR!

GOOD LORD!

"DESPITE ALL HER EXPERIENCE, DEBORAH FELT A MOMENT'S TERROR AT THE VAMPIRIC ATTACK...

"BUT THEN--"

EDGAR, WE--

WHAT?! MUST YOU BARGE IN HERE LIKE THAT, WOMAN?

IT'S GOOD THAT I DID... I RECOGNIZE THAT GIRL!

SHE IS ONE OF *ANDREW BENNETT'S* UNDERLINGS!

BENNETT? THE VAMPIRE HUNTER?

YES, EDGAR... AND I BELIEVE SHE WILL BE MORE USEFUL TO US *ALIVE!*

"THE CREATURE THAT HAD BEEN MISHKIN'S MOTHER LAUGHED AS SHE SCHEMED..." 5

"AND THE FOLLOWING EVENING, VIDEO CAMERAS TRANSMITTED WARNOCK'S IMAGE--AS SILVER-BASED PHOTOGRAPHIC FILM COULD NOT--THUS BRINGING VAMPIRISM INTO THE ELECTRONIC AGE..."

THIS, THEN, IS THE SELF-PROCLAIMED AMERICAN CRUSADE, A MOVEMENT WHICH HAS STEPPED FROM RELIGIOUS DOGMA INTO THE POLITICAL ARENA NOW--

KAT

--AS THE REVEREND EDGAR WARNOCK PREPARES TO PUT THE FULL BACKING OF HIS ORGANIZATION BEHIND SENATOR DAVID G. PAYSON...

...AND TO SUPPORT HIS BID FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE UNITED STATES!

"AND AS THE SENATOR SPOKE TO THE GATHERING THRONG..."

NO, EDGAR, YOU CANNOT HAVE HER YET...

WE STILL NEED HER AS LIVE BAIT!

OUR FAKED MESSAGE HAS SURELY BEEN RECEIVED BY BENNETT, AND HE WILL COME LOOKING FOR HER.

AFTER BENNETT IS DEALT WITH, SHE IS YOURS!

"INDEED I HAD COME LOOKING--AND HAD STUPIDLY STUMBLED INTO A TRAP... A TRAP I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT INESCAPABLE--

"--IF MY VERY THOUGHTS HAD NOT ALREADY CEASED TO BE..."

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YOUR FRIEND IS PROBABLY *BURNED TO A CRISP* BY NOW... I'M SORRY I HAD TO MISS IT!

CAN YOU BELIEVE THOSE IDIOTS, GOING AFTER BENNETT THE WAY THEY DID--

--AND NEVER REALIZING THAT THEIR *OWN LEADERS* ARE ALL VAMPIRES?

AND WHEN PAYSON BECOMES *PRESIDENT*--

--HE'LL BE A *VAMPIRE* TOO--

--OORR!

THANK GOD YOU GOT HERE, *MISHKIN!* WE HAVE TO HURRY!

ANDREW MAY ALREADY BE--

NO, HIS BODY IS STILL INTACT! BUT IF WE'RE TO RESCUE HIM, IT MUST BE--

--NOW!

QUICKLY, MISHKIN-- HELP ME UP HERE...

DEAR LORD, THE HEAT'S *UNBEARABLE!*

BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY--

--TO SAVE HIM!

HE'LL NEED TIME TO REVIVE! LET'S GET HIM DOWN FROM HERE!

NOW WE--

OH NO!

"MY RESCUERS HAD TWO CHOICES... THEY COULD JUMP INTO THE ARMS OF THE WAITING VAMPIRES--"

"--OR REMAIN ATOP THE DEADLY PYRE THAT HAD BEEN BUILT FOR ME!

"BUT IF THEY HAD NO OTHER OPTIONS --

"--I STILL HAD!"

ONCE AGAIN, MY GOOD FRIENDS, I OWE YOU MY EXISTENCE!

IT SEEMS ONLY RIGHT--

--THAT I SHOULD RETURN THE FAVOR!

"THE FEW REMAINING VAMPIRES WERE NO MATCH --

YAGGH!

AAAARK!

"--FOR ME AND MY COMPANIONS!

"THESE UNDEAD VILLAINS WOULD RISE NO MORE EXCEPT AS ASHES STREWN ON THE WINDS!"

AMERICA WILL RISE AGAIN, AS REVEREND WARNOCK HAS VOWED, OUT OF THE WAYS OF SIN!

AND I AM PROUD TO ACCEPT THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE AMERICAN CRUSADE!

YAY!!

NOW THE SENATOR AND I WILL SEQUESTER OURSELVES IN PRIVATE PRAYER...

...AND I ASK THAT ALL OF YOU SEND *YOUR* PRAYERS OUT AS WELL FOR THIS GREAT AMERICAN!

"THE TRUE PURPOSE OF WARNOCK'S PRIVATE MEETING WITH PAYSON WAS ONLY TOO CLEAR...

"THOUGH THE SENATOR BELIEVED HIMSELF A SKILLFUL MANIPULATOR OF EVENTS, PROUD OF HAVING LINKED HIMSELF TO A POWERFUL GRASSROOTS POLITICAL MOVEMENT...

"...IT WAS HE WHO HAD BEEN USED--"

REVEREND, I'M TRULY HONORED THAT YOU--

ENOUGH OF THIS PIOUS CHATTER, FOOL!

"--ACCORDING TO THE PLAN OF THE BLOOD RED MOON..."

GREAT GADFREY! YOU'RE--

A VAMPIRE...AS YOU WILL BE ALSO!

IMAGINE--A *VAMPIRE PRESIDENT!* QUEEN MARY WILL--

MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD, IS **MY** CREATION, WARNOCK-- AND I WILL *DESTROY* HER...

...AFTER I HAVE FINISHED WITH YOU!

BENNETT!

MY DISCIPLES PULLED THE STAKE FROM MY HEART-- AND NOW I'M GOING TO PUT ONE THROUGH *YOURS!*

YOU'LL DO NOTHING, FOUL CREATURE-- EVER AGAIN!

KRASH

OOF

YOUR POWER PLAY IS ENDED...

AND BY ALL THAT IS GOOD--

--SO IS YOUR VILE EXISTENCE!

KRRAGG!

"WIELDING THE VAMPIRIC POWER OF MESMERISM, I TURNED..."

YOU WILL FORGET ALL ABOUT THE UNDEAD, SENATOR...

YOU WILL REMEMBER ONLY YOUR NARROW ESCAPE FROM A TERRIBLE FIRE...

"--THOUGH IT LEFT UNSCATHED THE SOCIAL DISTEMPER THAT HAD FUELED HIS CRUSADE AND THE AMBITIONS OF DEMAGOGUES LIKE PAYSON!

"...A FIRE THAT CONSUMED THE EVIL OF THE REVEREND EDGAR WARNOCK--

"BUT THOSE WERE PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, NOT BY ME.

"I HAD ALREADY TURNED MY MIND TO OTHER CONCERNS THE FOREMOST BEING--

"--WHAT HAD BECOME OF MISHKIN..?"

SO YOU HAVE RETURNED TO ME AT LAST, MY SON.

DO YOU WISH TO KILL ME NOW, DMITRI IVANOVICH...

...OR WILL YOU LET ME BESTOW UPON YOU--A MOTHER'S LOVE?

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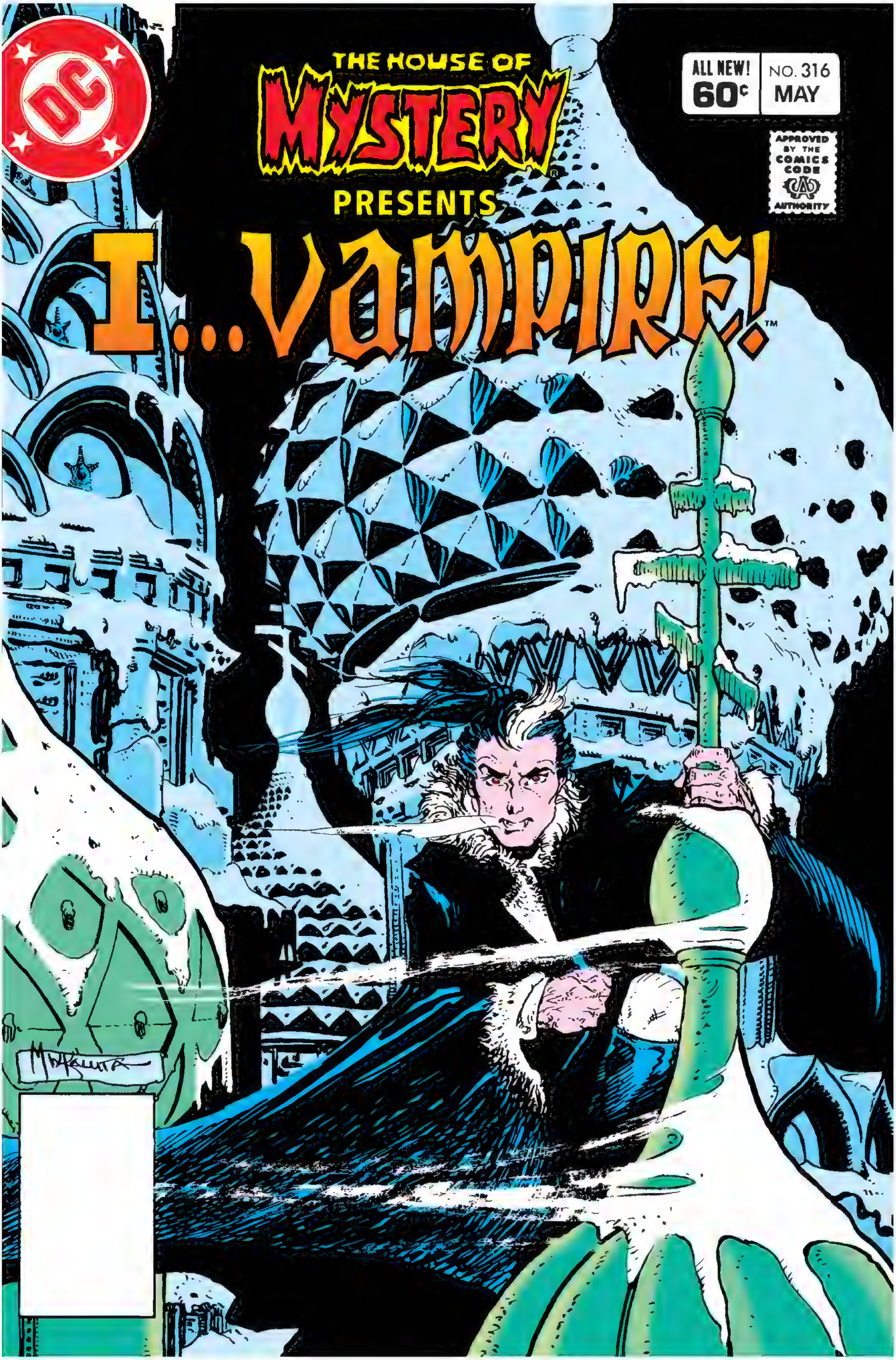
TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT EPISODE OF I000 VAMPIRE! BEGINNING A STUNNING MULTI-PART SAGA!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FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO, MY *VAMPIRIC KISS* TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED *MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD!* TODAY AN UNHOLY ORDER FOLLOWS HER EVIL DESIGNS, AND THE BLOOD THEY SPILL IS ON MY HANDS! THUS I MUST STOP HER...
...*I,* ANDREW BENNETT...

"BACK IN THE U.S.S.R.!"

"THE PATH I'D CUT THROUGH THE VAMPIRE UNDERGROUND OF NEW YORK CITY WAS STREWN WITH THE CORPSES OF THE UNDEAD!

"STILL MY COMPANION, DEBORAH DANCER, MADE NO MOVE TO RESTRAIN MY VIOLENT RAGE AS I INTERROGATED THIS UNHOLY DISCIPLE OF THE BLOOD RED MOON...

"...FOR SHE KNEW AS WELL AS I THAT ANY ANSWERS HE WOULD GIVE MIGHT ALREADY BE TOO LATE!"

WHERE, HELLSPAWN? WHERE HAS MY FRIEND BEEN TAKEN?!

WHERE IS *DIMITRI MISHKIN?*

DAN MISHKIN + GARY COHN *WRITERS* / PARIS CULLINS + TOM SUTTON *ARTISTS* / BEN ODA / ADRIENNE ROY *LETTERER COLORIST* / KAREN BERGER *EDITOR* / created by J.M. DeMATTEIS

"THE ANSWER--WHEN IT DID COME--WAS NOT UTTERLY SURPRISING, THOUGH IT WAS STILL WOEFULLY INCOMPLETE:

"MISHKIN, AT THE MERCY OF OUR SWORN ENEMIES, HAD BEEN TRANSPORTED BACK TO HIS NATIVE RUSSIA FOR PURPOSES UNKNOWN...

"...AND AS HIS ONLY FRIENDS--HIS ONLY HOPE--OF COURSE WE FOLLOWED...

"...DEBORAH AS A PASSENGER ABOARD THE NEXT FLIGHT TO MOSCOW...

"...AND I--BEFITTING MY DEBASED NATURE--AS CARGO..."

I FEAR YOU ARE ALREADY LOST TO US, OLD FRIEND.

THE ONLY EXPLANATION FOR YOUR DISAPPEARANCE IS THAT YOU WERE TAKEN BY *FORCE*...

...OR BY COERCION OF AN EVEN UGLIER SORT--THE *TWISTING* OF LOVE INTO MENTAL *TORTURE* AND *ANGUISHED SERVITUDE!*

"MISHKIN WAS TO HAVE REJOINED US AFTER THE FIERY DEMISE OF THE VAMPIRE EDGAR WARNOCK*...

"BUT EARLIER HE HAD CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE **ARCH-FIEND** WHOSE VERY EXISTENCE TORMENTED HIS OWN LIFE...

*LAST ISSUE--KB.

"...THE *UNDEAD VILLAINESS* WHO HAD ONCE BEEN--HIS *MOTHER!*

"I FELT SURE THAT HE HAD ENCOUNTERED HER ONCE AGAIN--AND THAT IT WAS SHE IN WHOSE HANDS HIS FATE NOW RESTED..."

2

"BUT WHAT THAT FATE MIGHT BE -- AND WHY IT WAS TO BE EXECUTED IN ANOTHER PART OF THE WORLD --

"-- I DARED NOT ASK MYSELF!

"SOON, DEBORAH WAS RESPONDING WITHOUT HESITATION TO THE ACCUSATORY TONE OF A SOVIET CUSTOMS OFFICIAL..."

THIS IS ALL THE LUGGAGE YOU HAVE BROUGHT FOR YOUR STAY?

YES -- I'LL ONLY BE HERE BRIEFLY...

...ON A FAMILY MATTER.

A MATTER RELATING, MISS DANCER --

--TO THE DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD?

MY LATE UNCLE WANTED TO BE BURIED IN HIS HOMELAND -- AND I'M CARRYING OUT HIS WISHES --

WE WILL NEVERTHELESS HAVE TO DISTURB HIS REST AND OPEN --

IT -- IS EMPTY --!

(LET HER GO, COMRADE INSPECTOR... WE WILL TAKE OVER NOW.)

"NOT SPEAKING RUSSIAN, DEBORAH HAD NO IDEA WHY SHE WAS BEING ALLOWED TO LEAVE..."

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"...NOR HAD SHE UNDERSTOOD THE EARLIER WHISPERS WHICH HAD SIGNALED ME THAT MY BEST COURSE WAS TO TURN TO MIST--

"--RATHER THAN BE EXPOSED IN MY COFFIN TO A STAKE THROUGH MY HEART!"

FORGIVE MY DEVIATION FROM OUR PLAN, DEBORAH...

ANDREW!

...BUT IT APPEARS THAT WE WERE EXPECTED!

MR. BENNETT... MISS DANCER... YOU WILL PLEASE COME WITH US.

"INDEED WE HAD BEEN EXPECTED--ALTHOUGH HOW OR WHY I COULD NOT YET IMAGINE.!

"STILL, I BELIEVED THAT WHATEVER THEIR PURPOSE IN SEEKING TO DETAIN US--

"--THESE AGENTS WERE NOT PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE AWESOME MIGHT OF A VAMPIRE!"

STOP, VAMPYR-- OR DIE!

ZZZZAT!

AAARRGH!

"THE RAY BLAST BURNED MY FLESH WITH THE AGONIZING FURY OF THE SUN ITSELF!

"HOW THEY HAD HARNESSED SUCH INTENSE ENERGIES IN A HAND WEAPON I KNEW NOT...

"BUT CLEARLY I HAD BEEN MISTAKEN--THEY WERE PREPARED FOR MY KIND! UNFORTUNATELY FOR THEM, THEY HAD NOT DESTROYED ME WITH THE FIRST SHOT...

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"AND THAT WAS TO PROVE THEIR UNDOING--

"--FOR ONE SHOT WAS ALL THAT I WOULD ALLOW!"

NYET! NYET!

〈YOU ARE KGB--SECRET POLICE, YES?〉

〈DA--DA! WE WERE ASSIGNED TO CAPTURE YOU IF POSSIBLE -- KILL YOU IF NECESSARY! THAT IS ALL I WILL TELL YOU!〉

ONE OF THEM HAD *DRAWINGS* OF YOU AND MARY--AND OTHER PROMINENT VAMPIRES!

THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON THAT I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF!

NOR I--BUT THIS ONE *WILL* TELL US MORE!

〈WHO SENT YOU HERE? WHAT IS THE *KGB'S* INTEREST IN THE UNDEAD?〉

〈COLONEL... RASHNIKOV...! TOP... SECRET... KREMLIN ... PROJECT...!〉

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"IT WAS DECADES AGO WHEN I LAST VENTURED INSIDE THE WALLS OF THE KREMLIN, THE CENTER OF POWER IN RUSSIA SINCE THE DAYS OF THE TSARS --

"--AND THOUGH THE OCCUPANTS HAD CHANGED, THE PLACE WAS MUCH THE SAME.

"I HAD LITTLE DIFFICULTY LOCATING COLONEL RASHNIKOV'S OFFICE ..."

I KNEW THE SOVIETS TOOK THE OCCULT VERY SERIOUSLY, BUT THESE FILES POINT TO A WEALTH OF DATA I *NEVER* WOULD HAVE EXPECTED.'

HERE'S SOMETHING THAT MAY BE -- EH?

HALT, INTRUDER! SURRENDER AT ONCE OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!

"HAVING NO DESIRE TO TEST MYSELF AGAINST THEIR SUN-RAY WEAPONS A SECOND TIME, I HASTILY TOOK TO THE NIGHT SKY ON LEATHERN WINGS --

"-- TAKING WITH ME THE ONE PIECE OF *USEFUL* INFORMATION I HAD GATHERED FROM RASHNIKOV'S FILES...

"... THE LOCATION OF A MAJOR INSTALLATION DEVOTED SOLELY TO THE STUDY OF *VAMPIRES AND VAMPIRISM!*"

ARE YOU SURE THIS PLACE HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH MISHKIN'S ABDUCTION, ANDREW?

HIS MOTHER-- *DUNYA* -- IS AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE *BLOOD RED MOON* -- SHE WOULD NOT SUDDENLY TAKE OFF FOR RUSSIA ON A LARK!

ADDITIONALLY THE REACTION TO OUR ARRIVAL WOULD INDICATE THAT THE *KGB* WAS ANTICIPATING TROUBLE FROM *SOMEONE!*

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AND SINCE THIS *IS* OUR ONLY LEAD, WE REALLY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FOLLOW IT!

"VAULTING THE ELECTRIFIED BARBED WIRE FENCE AFTER THE PATROLLING GUARDS HAD PASSED, I HOPED WE MIGHT REACH THE NEAREST BUILDING UNACCOSTED...

"ONLY THE DOGS COULD POSE A PROBLEM, I THOUGHT...

"...BUT I DID NOT REALIZE--"

GOOD LORD!

"-- HOW MUCH OF A PROBLEM THAT MIGHT BE!

SNAARLL

GRRARH

"I SAW THE WERE-BEAST'S FANGS GLINT LIKE SILVER AS HE POUNCED!

"THE CREATURES HAD APPARENTLY BEEN BRED SOLELY TO FEND OFF AND KILL VAMPIRES--

"--BUT I DARED NOT TURN TO MIST AND HAVE THEM SETTLE FOR DEBORAH'S HELPLESS HUMAN FLESH!"

<ENOUGH! DO NOT HARM HIM!>

I AM SPEAKING, NO DOUBT, TO THE NOTORIOUS *ANDREW BENNETT.*

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF--

I AM COLONEL YURI RASHNIKOV, AT YOUR SERVICE!

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WHAT!? HAS THE BLOOD RED MOON EVEN PENE-TRATED THE KGB?

NOT AT ALL, BENNETT! I AM A LOYAL SON OF MOTHER RUSSIA!

BUT YOU'RE A VAMPIRE!

SO TOO WILL BE ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO -- THE ENTIRE SOVIET LEADERSHIP--

ALTHOUGH SADLY CHAIRMAN BREZHNEV DID NOT LIVE TO SEE THIS PLAN ON THE THRESHOLD OF SUCCESS!

BUT SURELY YOU ARE AWARE OF ALL THIS OR YOU WOULD NOT BE HERE NOW!

THIS IS WHAT YOU CAME FOR AFTER ALL-- YOU AND YOUR ENEMIES IN THE BLOOD RED MOON, VYING TO SNATCH THE FRUITS OF OUR LABORS!

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE'S--?

I HAVE NO IDEA, DEBORAH.

PFAH! DO YOU THINK WE ARE CHILDREN, BENNETT? YOU, MORE THAN MOST, MUST WISH YOU COULD USE THIS POWDER!

BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE, MY FRIEND! YOU ARE MY PRISONER AND--

8

"ALL AT ONCE THE COMPOUND ERUPTED IN PANDEMONIUM..."

CURSE YOU, BENNETT! WHILE YOU PLAY GAMES WITH ME, OUR SECURITY HAS BEEN BREACHED --

-- BY THE BLOOD RED MOON!

"DUNYA'S SQUAD ATTACKED WITHOUT MERCY-- LETTING RAPID-FIRE ADVANCED WEAPONRY DECIMATE THE OPPOSITION -- RATHER THAN INDULGE THEIR VAMPIRIC BLOODLUST!

"ALL OF COLONEL RASHNIKOV'S EXPERIENCE FAILED HIM --

"-- AS HE WATCHED HIS WELL-LAID PLANS CRUMBLING UNDER THE RESULT!

"MY RESPONSE, HOWEVER, WAS UNHAMPERED BY SUCH CONCERNS...

"... AND I HAD ONLY TO LET INSTINCTS BORN WITH THE UNDEAD RISE TO THE FORE!"

RELEASE THE PACKET, COLONEL!

GR-KKK!

"IF THE BLOOD RED MOON AND THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP BOTH WANTED THIS SUBSTANCE -- WHATEVER IT WAS --"

"I MEANT TO HAVE IT FOR MY OWN!

"POSSESSING THE POWDER MIGHT AT LEAST GIVE ME A BARGAINING CHIP IN MY EFFORT TO LOCATE MISHKIN...

!!..THOUGH THAT WOULD BE OF LITTLE VALUE IF DEBORAH AND I FAILED TO MAKE GOOD OUR ESCAPE FROM THESE PREMISES!"

STAY BEHIND ME, DEBORAH!

NO, ANDREW, IF YOU CAN'T SAVE YOURSELF, THEN--

"THE DEVIL-DOGS SPRANG AS ONE--

ZAP!

"--BUT NEVER REACHED THEIR TARGET!

"I TURNED TO MEET OUR RESCUER-- AND FOUND A FACE AT ONCE FAMILIAR YET HORRIBLY TRANSFORMED..."

OH, GOD-- MISHKIN! NOT YOU! YOU'RE--

--A VAMPIRE!

"HE HAD SAVED US, YES--BUT I KNEW NOW THAT MY POOR FRIEND WAS HIMSELF BEYOND SALVATION...!

TO BE CONTINUED!

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FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO MY VAMPIRIC KISS TRANSFORMED THE WOMAN I LOVED INTO A SOULLESS THING CALLED MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD! TODAY AN UNHOLY ORDER FOLLOWS HER EVIL DESIGNS AND THE BLOOD THEY SPILL IS ON MY HANDS! THUS I MUST STOP HER...

...I, ANDREW BENNETT...

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"WE HAD COME SO FAR TOGETHER, WE THREE, BATTLING THE BLOOD RED MOON AROUND THE GLOBE...

"BOTH DMITRI MISHKIN AND DEBORAH DANCER HAD JOINED ME AS CHILDREN WHEN MY BELOVED, EVIL MARY LEFT HER INDELIBLE TAINT ON THEIR LIVES--BUT OF THE THREE OF US, ONLY I KNEW THE CURSE OF VAMPIRISM FROM WITHIN...

"...ONLY I, THAT IS, UNTIL TONIGHT... FOR MISHKIN TOO WAS NOW ONE OF THE UNDEAD--

"AND THE SHIVER I FELT DOWN MY SPINE WAS NOT BROUGHT ON BY WINTER'S COLD--BUT BY DARK FOREBODING..."

BLOOD IS THICKER...

DAN MISHKIN + CARY COHN WRITERS / PARIS CULLINS + TOM SUTTON ARTISTS / BEN ODA - LETTEER ADRIENNE ROY - COLORIST / KAREN BERGER EDITOR / created by J.M. DeMATTEIS

"DEBORAH AND I HAD COME HERE TO RUSSIA IN SEARCH OF OUR LOST COMRADE... BUT IN FINDING HIM WE UNCOVERED A DIFFERENT MYSTERY--

"--AND DANGER ON EVERY SIDE...

THERE'S NO PLACE TO RUN, MY FRIENDS -- I'M AFRAID WE MUST STAND AND FIGHT!

WE CAN BEAT THEM, ANDREW! I LIFTED A SUN RAY WEAPON FROM ONE OF THE KGB AGENTS!

"I STILL HAD NOT FATHOMED THE REASON FOR THE SUDDEN INTEREST THAT THE KGB -- THE SOVIET SECRET POLICE -- AND THE BLOOD RED MOON HAD TAKEN IN ONE ANOTHER..."

COME ON, BENNETT! LET ME BE THE ONE TO GIVE MARY YOUR HEAD ON A POLE!

"...BUT I SENSED THAT WE WERE CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF A PRIVATE WAR --

"-- WHOSE STAKES WERE EXTREMELY HIGH NOT MERELY FOR THE PRINCIPALS...

"...BUT FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD AS WELL!"

ARRRGHH!

THAT'S THE LAST OF THEM! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

"THE INTENSE BEAM, LIKE SUNLIGHT, BURNED MY ATTACKER'S FLESH -- AS I HAD BEEN BURNED EARLIER*..."

*LAST ISSUE -- KB

"THERE WAS A HARDNESS IN DEBORAH'S TONE THAT DISTURBED ME...

2

"...WITH MISHKIN NO LONGER HUMAN, WAS I LOSING ALSO THE INNOCENT GIRL I HAD RESCUED FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THE UNDEAD A DOZEN YEARS BEFORE?"

OH, MY FRIENDS ...MY POOR, DEAR FRIENDS...

ANDREW, GET HOLD OF YOURSELF...WHATEVER'S *WORRYING* YOU WILL HAVE TO WAIT.

"SHE WAS RIGHT, OF COURSE...

"...AND HER WORDS, THOUGH IN TRUTH A COMMAND, WERE TOUCHED WITH A GENTLENESS THAT WOULD HAVE PUT MY MIND COMPLETELY AT EASE--

"--WERE IT NOT FOR MISHKIN'S CONTINUING SILENCE!

"HE HAD SPOKEN BARELY A WORD SINCE WE ENCOUNTERED HIM AT THE NEARBY KGB INSTALLATION, NOR HAD I HAD THE CHANCE TO QUESTION HIM ABOUT HIS HELLISH TRANSFORMATION...

"...AND I WONDERED IF IT WAS THE SHOCK OR SHAME OF THAT UNHOLY RESURRECTION THAT QUIETED HIM--

"--OR SOMETHING ELSE ALTOGETHER...!"

YAARRH!

"...AND JUST AS SWIFTLY WE *FLED INTO THE NIGHT!*"

HA! A PERFECT SHOT!

DOES THE CHASE *EXCITE* YOU, DUNYA?

AH, MARY, YOU'VE ARRIVED FOR THE BEST PART...

MY PATHETIC SON DMITRI *PLAYS HIS ROLE* PERFECTLY!

VERY SOON, *ANDREW BENNETT* WILL MEET HIS *EXTINCTION* AT LAST--

AND YOU AND I, *MUCH BELOVED QUEEN*, WILL SHARE IN THE SORT OF *ETERNAL LIFE* WE HAVE ALWAYS CRAVED...

3

"WE RAN THROUGH THE NIGHT, EVADING THE LAST PURSUERS... BUT WE KNEW THAT THE NIGHT WOULD SOON END...

"...AND THAT MISHKIN AND I MUST FIND SHELTER FROM THE COMING DAWN...

THAT CABIN ISN'T MUCH, BUT IT SHOULD DO TO PROTECT YOU TWO IF WE CAN COVER UP THE WINDOWS.

"... AND, I TOLD MYSELF SILENTLY, IF WE WERE NOT MET BY YET ANOTHER CONTINGENT OF ENEMIES--

"--OR RESISTED BY OCCUPANTS OF THE TINY SHACK WHO DID NOT WISH TO SHARE THEIR ABODE WITH VAMPIRES!

"BUT THANKFULLY, WE FOUND THE CABIN EMPTY OF ALL SIGNS OF THE LIVING OR THE UNDEAD--

"--AND AT LAST WE LET EXHAUSTION OVERTAKE US...!

"STILL, AS WE SAT WEARILY ON THE COLD WOOD FLOOR, I COULD SENSE A STRANGENESS ABOUT THIS PLACE--

"--A SENSE THAT FATEFUL DEEDS HAD HAPPENED HERE, AND THAT THE AIR HAD NOT YET CLEANED ITSELF OF THEIR RESIDUE...

"IT WAS AS THOUGH--"

MY GOD--! DO YOU KNOW WHERE WE ARE, ANDREW?

"WHEN HE FINALLY SPOKE, HIS VOICE WAS FILLED WITH PAIN AND LONGING I WOULD HAVE BELIEVED TO BE UNUTTERABLE..."

THIS IS WHERE I WAS BORN...

...WHERE MY MOTHER WAS MADE A VAMPIRE--!

"WE HAD COME SO FAR TOGETHER, MISHKIN AND I...

"...AND MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY OF WANDERING AND STRUGGLES HAD BROUGHT US BACK TO WHERE WE HAD BEGUN..."

THIS IS MY--

--HOME...

LOOK--OUTSIDE! THIS IS WHERE THEY WANTED US TO COME TO ALL ALONG...!

THEY'VE BEEN *HERDING* US HERE INTENTIONALLY!

YES--BUT IT'S NEARLY MORNING... THEY WON'T ATTACK US NOW AND RISK BEING CAUGHT BY THE HARSH LIGHT OF DAY!

THEY'LL BURROW INTO THE EARTH AND AWAIT THE DUSK, KNOWING THAT *MISHKIN AND I* ARE JUST AS UNABLE TO QUIT THIS PLACE...

BUT *YOU*, DEBORAH--YOU'RE NOT BOUND BY THE DICTATES OF *VAMPIRIC AFFLICTION*...

LEAVE US AT SUNRISE--WHILE YOU STILL CAN!

YOU KNOW I WON'T DO THAT... NOT *NOW*.

"THERE WAS NO USE PLEADING--SHE WOULD NOT GO...

"...NOR WOULD SHE ARGUE WITH ME FURTHER! SHE TURNED TO SPEAK TO MISHKIN..."

WHAT HAPPENED, DMITRI, THAT NIGHT IN WASHINGTON?

"SLOWLY--SADLY--HE TOLD US HOW AFTER WE'D BEEN SEPARATED, HE LOCATED HIS MOTHER ONCE AGAIN...*

"HE HAD ADVANCED ON HER--

"--THINKING HIMSELF PREPARED TO END HER EXISTENCE AT LONG LAST..."

*HOM #315--KB.

"BUT HE WAS NOT, AND SHE KNEW IT WELL!

"SHE LAUGHED AT HIM... MOCKED HIM...

"...THEN OPENED WIDE HER ARMS, FORGIVING HER WAYWARD SON, AND OFFERING HIM LOVE--

"--OF A KIND..."

I-I *PRAYED* FOR YOU TO COME, ANDREW-- TO BREAK HER SPELL... FOR AT THAT MOMENT I WANTED NOT HER DEATH, BUT ONLY HER LOVE...

GOD HELP ME, I WENT TO HER--! SHE IS -- ***MY MOTHER***...

"I COULD NOT CONSOLE HIM-- COULD NOT STOP HIS PAIN...

"...IN THE END--I HAD FAILED HIM MISERABLY...!

"SO I TURNED THEN TO THE MATTER AT HAND--A SITUATION THAT I COULD PERHAPS EXERT SOME CONTROL OVER...

"...IF ONLY MISHKIN MIGHT ANSWER ONE QUESTION: WHY HAD THE **BLOOD RED MOON** COME TO RUSSIA?"

'IT'S THAT SUBSTANCE YOU TOOK FROM RASHNIKOV* ... A SUBSTANCE THAT WOULD NEGATE THE ***WORST ASPECTS*** OF VAMPIRISM --

--ELIMINATING THE ***BLOODLUST***, THE NEED TO ***SHUN*** THE DAY-- BUT STILL ALLOWING ***ETERNAL LIFE!***

*LAST ISSUE-- KB.

THE SOVIETS-- HAVE ACCOMPLISHED ***THIS!?***

"HE EXPLAINED THE PLAN OF THE ***AGING COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP***-- TO MAKE THEMSELVES IMMORTAL RULERS BY BECOMING A ***NEW BREED*** OF VAMPIRE...

"...AND I THANKED THE IMPULSE THAT HAD CAUSED ME TO GRAB THE PACKET WHEN I DID-- FOR NOW IT WOULD BE MY ***SALVATION...!***"

NO, ANDREW!

IT IS STILL UNTESTED! IT MAY NOT WORK AT ALL...

...OR IT MIGHT LEAVE YOU WORSE OFF THAN BEFORE!

"RELUCTANTLY, I AGREED WITH HIS REASONING... IF WE SURVIVED THE NEXT NIGHT--IF WE REACHED SAFETY-- ***THEN*** THERE WOULD BE TIME TO TEST THE MIRACULOUS SUBSTANCE!

"THUS, AS DAYLIGHT BRIGHTENED THE WORLD WITHOUT, MISHKIN AND I RESIGNED OURSELVES TO THE SLEEP OF THE UNDEAD...

"...WHILE ***DEBORAH*** FOCUSED HER ATTENTION ON ***OTHER*** SLUMBERERS...!

6

"A VAMPIRE IS NO MORE HELPLESS THAN WHEN HE TAKES HIS SLEEP...

"...LEFT UNPROTECTED FROM THE HUNTERS OF THE DAY, HE IS AWARE THAT EACH PERIOD OF REST MIGHT BECOME AN OBLIVION --

"--FROM WHICH HE SHALL NEVER AWAKEN...!

"...BUT KNOWING THAT, HE LEARNS TO KEEP HIS SENSES RAZOR KEEN, EVEN IN SILENT REPOSE.

"AND THE DECEPTIVELY VULNERABLE TARGET MAY SPRING AT ONCE TO PREDATORY WAKEFULNESS...

"...MAKING YET ANOTHER VICTIM OF HIS WOULD-BE SLAYER!

"SO THE HUNTER MUST STRIKE WITH SPEED AND UNERRING FINALITY --

"--AS DEBORAH DANCER DID THAT DAY!

AAAAAA

KER-CUNK!

"NIGHT FELL..."

YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE STAYED, DEBORAH.

THERE ARE SEVEN FEWER BLOOD RED MOON YAMPIRES OUT THERE TO CONTEND WITH NOW...

I'M NOT SURE HOW MANY ARE LEFT--

7

--BUT IT OUGHT TO GIVE US AN EDGE.

"NO, THIS WAS NOT THE GIRL I HAD KNOWN...

"...FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THIS WAS A WOMAN WHO HAD GROWN A HARD OUTER SHELL--

"LIKE THE ONE I WORE...

"...AND I PRAYED THAT THAT SHELL PROTECTED A HEART WHICH, HAVING DISCOVERED HOW TO HATE, HAD NOT LOST ITS CAPACITY TO LOVE..."

ANDREW-- IT'S MISHKIN!

IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT'S HOLY, *WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?*

MY MOTHER... CALLS TO ME...

NO! PUT IT BACK BEFORE--

"TOO LATE I REALIZED MY MISTAKE IN NOT WATCHING MISHKIN MORE CLOSELY.

"THE BLOOD THAT TIED SON TO MOTHER--NOW PERVERTED BY SHARED VAMPIRISM --

CRASH!

"--HAD LEFT HIM AT BEST CONFUSED AND UNPREDICTABLE...

"...AT WORST AN ENEMY TO BE FEARED!

8

"BUT IF MISHKIN HAD BECOME OUR FOE--

"--HE WAS NO BETTER LOVED BY THE BLOOD RED MOON FOR HIS CONVERSION!"

LET US FINISH THIS ONE OFF FIRST, ILYA!

GET BACK, MONSTER! DON'T ANY OF YOU TOUCH HIM!

WHA--

AARRK

"DEBORAH AND I CONTINUED TO HOLD OUR OWN--

"--BUT WE WERE ONLY TWO AGAINST THE FANATICAL ASSAULT!

"WHAT WE TRULY NEEDED MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE--

"--TO OPERATE AT PEAK EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST THE OVERWHELMING ODDS--

"--WAS MISHKIN!"

DIE, YOU FIEND FROM SATAN!

"THEN--AS SUDDENLY AS THE ATTACK HAD BEGUN--IT WAS OVER..."

I-I'M SORRY, ANDREW...

DON'T BE... I'M JUST THANKFUL YOU *RETURNED TO YOUR SENSES* IN TIME!

NOW WE HAVE A CHANCE TO--

NO MORE CHANCES, *BENNETT!*

DUNYA!

MOTHER--!

NO!

"POSSESSING EVEN GREATER FURY THAN THE PISTOLS I'D ENCOUNTERED, HER SUN RIFLE LASHED ME WITH ITS SEARING RAY...

YOU ARE FINISHED, BENNETT! YOUR DAMNED CRUSADE IS *ENDED*--

AND THE TRUE REIGN OF MY QUEEN HAS BEGUN!

FAREWELL, ANDREW BENNETT!

"AND AS I FELL--"

DEBORAH, DON'T! SHE IS MY *MOTHER*--!

MISHKIN, YOU IDIOT! IT'S--

--ENDED... AS I PROMISED!

HOLD IT, LADY! YOUR SUN GUN'S NOT GOING TO GIVE ME ANYTHING WORSE THAN A QUICK TAN!

BUT *MINE* CAN--

ZAP!

:UNFF:

10

NOW, LITTLE ONE, YOU TOO WILL BE OURS, *BODY AND SOUL!*

NOT YET, DUNYA...

YOU STILL *SURVIVE*--

BUT ONLY UNTIL I--

MAMA...

I *SAVED* YOU, MAMA...

DO YOU... *LOVE* ME NOW...?

BAH! WHAT USE HAVE I FOR YOUR LOVE?

BUT I'M DYING... MAMA...

THEN DIE AND BE *DONE* WITH YOU!

WEAKLINGS! ALL OF YOU-- PATHETIC WEAKLINGS!

EVEN *YOU,* BENNETT-- NO MATTER YOUR PERSISTENCE --HAVE NEVER HAD THE WILL TO--

:URGGK:

THIS... *CREATURE*... WAS NOT...

...MY MOTHER...

"*DESPITE THE PAIN THAT STILL BLISTERED ACROSS MY CHEST, I KNEW THAT MY BODY WAS ALREADY SLOWLY HEALING...*

"*BUT THE WOUND SUFFERED BY DMITRI MISHKIN WAS DEEPER YET THAN THOSE SUPERFICIAL BURNS...*

"*IT HAD BEEN INFLICTED WHEN HE SAW HIS MOTHER DIE-- ONLY TO RISE UP A SPAWN OF HELL... AND TODAY IT DESTROYED HIM!*

"*THROUGH MY TEARS I SAW MISHKIN'S FATE BECKONING... TO ME!*"

NEXT:
MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD!

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY®

PRESENTS

ALL NEW! 60¢ | NO. 318 JULY

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

I...Vampire!™

C-355

"I, THE *PURSUER OF DEMONS*, HAVE BEEN THEIR *PREY* AS WELL! I, WHO MADE MY LOVE A THING OF *SOULLESS EVIL*, HAVE HUNTED HER FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS PAST OUR DEATHS--*HATING* HER, BUT *YEARNING* FOR HER STILL-- WHILE SHE HAS CRAVED ONLY FOR *POWER*... AND *MY* FINAL DEMISE!

"WE HAVE *CHASED* EACH OTHER IN AN ENDLESS ROUND--*SHE* NOW THE *QUARRY*, *I* NOW HER *GAME!* SHE IS *MARY, QUEEN OF THE BLOOD RED MOON*, AND I AM HER *NEMESIS*...

WRITERS
Dan Mishkin
and
Gary Cohn

PENCILS
Dan Day

INKS
Tom Sutton

LETTERER
Ben Oda
•
COLORIST
Adrienne Roy

EDITOR
Karen Berger

CREATED BY
J.M. DeMatteis

I, ANDREW BENNETT...

I...Vampire!

"THE RECENT WEEKS HAD BEEN FILLED WITH SIGNS AND DARK FOREBODINGS, AS THOUGH FATE WERE CRYING OUT THAT THE CIRCLE WOULD SOON BE BROKEN UTTERLY AND AT LAST...

"... THAT FOR MARY OR FOR ME, PARIS -- THE CITY OF LIGHT AND OF LOVE -- WOULD MARK JOURNEY'S END..!"

STILL BROODING, ANDREW?

ABOUT MISHKIN'S *DEATH*, I MEAN.

NO, *DEBORAH*, I'M RECONCILED TO THAT -- AS MUCH AS I'LL EVER BE.

IT'S THE *FUTURE* I'M CONCERNED WITH NOW, NOT THE PAST!

"BUT IN TRUTH I WAS A PRISONER TO THE PAST--

"--AND HAD BARELY HAD TIME TO CONSIDER MY NEXT STEP AS MARY AND I CHASED EACH OTHER ACROSS THE FACE OF EUROPE...

"--SEEKING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE RUSSIAN FORMULA I NOW POSSESSED...

FINLAND
BALTIC SEA
SWEDEN
Moscow
USSR
NORTH SEA
IRELAND
ENGLAND
HOLLAND
GERMAN EAST
WE
POLAND
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
HUNGARY
RUMANIA
AUSTRIA
Paris
FRANCE
YUGOSLAVIA
ITALY
ATLANTIC OCEAN
SPAIN
MED
RRANEAN SEA
AFRICA

"... THE FORMULA THAT MIGHT MEAN THE END OF MY YAMPIRIC AFFLICTION FOREVER!!!

2

CAN YOU IMAGINE IT, DEBORAH -- TO HAVE A VAMPIRE'S ABILITIES *WITHOUT* HIS AWFUL APPETITE FOR *BLOOD*?

WHAT *GOOD* MIGHT I HAVE ACHIEVED THESE PAST FOUR CENTURIES WERE IT NOT FOR THE *TERRIFIC CIMITATIONS* OF MY CURSE!

BUT WE'RE STILL NOT CERTAIN THAT IT'S *TRUE*! WE HARDLY KNOW--

WE KNOW *ENOUGH*! WE KNOW THAT THE BLOOD-RED MOON WOULD *FALL* BEFORE SUCH POWER...

WE KNOW THAT DESPITE ALL OUR EFFORTS TO STOP THEM UP TILL NOW, MARY AND HER MINIONS *CONTINUE TO THRIVE*!

SO WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?

IT LEAVES US WITH THE INFORMATION I GAINED WHEN I RETURNED TO RASHNIKOV'S FILES IN *MOSCOW*.

I KNOW THE *DOSAGE* THE SOVIET SCIENTISTS PRESCRIBED...

THIS PACKET CONTAINS ENOUGH FOR TWO.

NO, ANDREW! THE *RISK* IS TOO GREAT! IT'S STILL *UNTESTED*!

IT SHALL BE TESTED... *NOW*!

THE RUSSIANS HAD DISCOVERED THAT THE ACTUAL TRANSMITTER OF VAMPIRISM FROM THE UNDEAD TO THE LIVING WAS A KIND OF VIRUS--

3

"... AND WHEN COMBINED WITH METABOLIC STABILIZERS THAT MAINTAIN THE PROCESSES OF LIFE--WOULD PRODUCE LIVING VAMPIRES, FREE FROM THE RAVAGES OF THE GRAVE...

"... THOUGH NOT FREE FROM THE AGONY OF TRANSFORMATION!"

ANDREW--!

THE PAIN, DEBORAH! THE PAIN!

PERHAPS A DOCTOR...?

HA...! WHAT COULD A DOCTOR...DO FOR ME?

"THE MINUTES MOVED LIKE HOURS... THE HOURS SEEMED LIKE ETERNITIES IN HELL!

"BUT AT LENGTH THE LONG NIGHT ENDED...

"... AND THEN THE PAIN..."

IT -- HAHA -- IT'S OVER, DEBORAH!

AHAHAHA! I'M A MAN AGAIN!

WHAT ARE YOU--

DON'T YOU SEE, MY DARLING, IT'S DAWN...

...AND I CAN FACE THE SUN!

4

HOW GLORIOUS TO GREET THE DAY WITHOUT FEAR!

THEN YOU'RE NO LONGER A VAMPIRE!

ON THE CONTRARY...

I AM A NEW KIND OF VAMPIRE!

AND I--I HUNGER! I AM RAVENOUS!

DEAR GOD...!

NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND--! I'M HUNGRY...

...FOR FOOD! FOR REAL FOOD!

"I COULD FEEL ALL MY NORMAL BODILY FUNCTIONS, DORMANT FOR SO LONG, REAWAKENING!

"AND AS I FINISHED BREAKING A FOUR HUNDRED-YEAR FAST...

"... I FELT OTHER APPETITES RETURNING AS WELL!

"AND LATER, AS DEBORAH AND I STRODE THROUGH THE FULLNESS OF DAYLIGHT..."

PARIS IS AS *BEAUTIFUL* AS YOU DESCRIBED IT, *ANDREW.*

IT'S EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN MY *MEMORY*... FOR IN THE SCORE OF YEARS I LIVED IN THIS CITY, I NEVER SAW IT IN THE DAY!

BUT THAT WAS *ANOTHER LIFE*... THIS MORNING I WAS *REBORN!*

"INDEED THERE WAS ONLY A SLIGHT STIFFNESS IN MY EXTREMITIES TO REMIND ME OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S TORMENT...

"...AND THIS CONDITION I TOOK TO BE AS TEMPORARY--

"--AS MY CURRENT LIGHT-HEARTEDNESS...

THIS HAS BEEN *LOVELY,* ANDREW, BUT--

--WE HAVE *WORK* TO ATTEND TO, I KNOW.

COME WITH ME.

YOU'VE HEARD THE FRENCH EXPRESSION, DEBORAH--"PLUS CA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MEME CHOSE"?

LOOSELY TRANSLATED--THE *MORE* THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY REMAIN THE SAME.

YES... *FIFTY YEARS AGO,* THIS NIGHT-CLUB WAS A GATHERING SPOT FOR THE *VAMPIRE UNDERGROUND* OF PARIS...

IT'S CONCEIVABLE THAT WE'LL FIND--

〈YOU HAVE BUSINESS HERE, MON AMI?〉

〈MY BUSINESS IS WITH *MARY*... IS SHE IN?〉

6

〈AND JUST WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MARY?!〉
〈FAR MORE THAN SHE TELLS HER GREEDY HUMAN HENCHMEN, I CAN ASSURE YOU.!〉
〈THEN WE WILL SIMPLY HAVE TO--〉
〈EH?! MY BULLETS PASS THROUGH HIM!〉
〈HE'S A VAMPIRE, CLAUDE! ONE OF MARY'S RIVALS!〉
CHOK
〈BUT THIS SUNLIGHT WEAPON WILL SEAR HIS DEAD FLESH!〉
"TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AGO THIS PISTOL WOULD HAVE HARMED ME-- AS A SIMILAR ONE HAD IN RUSSIA--BUT NOW..."
〈THE--THE SUN RAY HAS NO EFFECT ON YOU...?〉
〈FOOL! I JUST CAME OUT OF THE SUNLIGHT MOMENTS AGO!〉
7

"AND PRESENTLY, WHEN A SEARCH OF THE PREMISES UNCOVERED NO NEW LEADS..."

WHY DID YOU NEVER TELL ME OF THIS PLACE WHEN WE WORKED TOGETHER, ANDREW?

THAT WAS *WARTIME*, HENRI, AND THE MAJOR THREAT FROM THE *BLOOD RED MOON* TOOK A *DIFFERENT* FORM!

AND NOW?

NOW WE HAVE A *UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY* TO STOP *THEM FOREVER*.., IF WE CAN LOCATE MARY'S *PARIS HEADQUARTERS!*

ATRE

CE SOIR

THE REACTION OF THOSE *TWO HOODLUMS* PROVES THAT SHE IS STILL *CONNECTED* TO THIS CLUB...

AND *YOUR* POSITION AND AWARENESS OF THE *VAMPIRE MENACE* MEAN THAT YOU CAN PROVIDE US WITH *INVALUABLE HELP!*

"HENRI AGREED TO MY PLAN... AND SO I RETURNED THAT NIGHT TO THE THEATRE...

'... ALONE...

"BUT NOT FOR LONG..."

ARE YOU HERE TO *DRINK*, OR FOR THE ...*ENTERTAINMENT?*

"ON THE STAGE, THE *NUMAN COUPLE* CLUNG TO EACH OTHER, TERRIFIED UNDER THE SPOTLIGHTS' GLARE...

"...THE 'ENTERTAINMENT' WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN!

"SOON ALL ATTENTION WAS FIXED ON THE EXAGGERATED, HYPNOTIC MOVEMENTS OF THE TWO VAMPIRESSES--

"--BUT THEIR DANCE OF UNHOLY SEDUCTION WAS MEANT FOR ONE PAIR OF EYES ALONE...!

"THE BOY COULD NOT RESIST THEIR SIREN CALL--NOR HEED HIS LOVER'S PLEAS TO STAY...

"THEN IT WAS SHE WHO WAS DRAWN INTO THE THRALL OF A NEW PLAYER ON THE STAGE, WELCOMING HIS COLD EMBRACE--

"...AND BREATHLESSLY ANTICIPATING THE CLIMAX OF HER TERROR...

"BUT SUCH A CULMINATION WAS NOT TO BE..."

(STOP! ALL OF YOU REMAIN IN YOUR SEATS!)

"... AS MY OLD FRIEND HENRI LEFEBVRE SET HIS END OF OUR PLAN INTO MOTION...!

PLEASE HELP ME...

I HAVE NOWHERE TO GO IN THIS CITY!

EXIT

FOLLOW ME THEN...

I WILL LEAD US TO SAFETY!

〈I'M AFRAID THESE TWO WILL BE OF LITTLE *HELP*, COMMANDER...〉

〈THEY REMEMBER *NOTHING* OF WHAT HAPPENED AFTER BEING ABDUCTED.〉

〈YES, LEFEBVRE, BUT I THOUGHT THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AN *ILLEGAL GAMBLING HOUSE!* I SEE NO *GAMING TABLES--!*〉

〈MY INFORMATION WAS NOT ENTIRELY *ACCURATE*, IT SEEMS.〉

〈AND I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW *EVERY ONE* OF THE CLIENTELE *SLIPPED* THROUGH OUR LINES!〉

"AS MY COMPANION AND I RACED DOWN WINDING STREETS THROUGH THE CITY'S BLEAKEST SLUMS--

"--I FOUND MYSELF UNACCUSTOMEDLY SHORT OF BREATH...

"...AND WITH AN ACHING IN MY JOINTS THAT I COULD NOT ACCOUNT FOR..."

WE ARE HERE...

10

THE *CHURCH OF THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB*--SACKED BY THE *NAZIS* DURING THE OCCUPATION AND LATER *DECONSECRATED*...

NOW IT SERVES THE PURPOSES OF THE *BLOOD RED MOON!*

HERE A *WANDERING VAMPIRE* CAN ALWAYS FIND A *SPARE COFFIN*...

...OR YOU MIGHT SHARE *MINE*...

IF I WERE NOT SO TIRED... PERHAPS ANOTHER DAY.

"THE OLD CATHEDRAL HOUSED HUNDREDS OF COFFINS!

"ACCORDING TO MY PLAN, I WOULD SEARCH FOR MARY WHILE THE VAMPIRES SLEPT BY DAY...

"...FIRST DESTROYING HER AND THEN SETTING THE PLACE ABLAZE!

"SOON I SENSED MORNING'S ARRIVAL, BUT...

"BUT TRY AS I MIGHT... I COULD NOT MOVE!

"MORNING PASSED-- AFTERNOON CAME AND WENT--

"--AND IN EVENING'S HOUR I LAY HELPLESS AND IMMOBILE BEFORE MY ENEMIES...

"...BEFORE MY BELOVED MARY--!

SO YOU *TOOK* THE SERUM, ANDREW, *HEEDLESS* OF THE CONSEQUENCES ...AND YOU SEE WHAT IT HAS *DONE* TO YOU!

STRUGGLE ALL YOU WILL, MY LOVE, BUT EVEN *YOU* CANNOT OVERCOME... *RIGOR MORTIS!*

THE STUNNING SAGA OF ANDREW BENNET REACHES ITS SHATTERING CONCLUSION... NEXT MONTH! BE HERE!

THE HOUSE OF
MYSTERY
PRESENTS
I...Vampire!
The FINAL CHAPTER
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"ONCE I LIVED LIKE ANY MAN, THEN PERISHED AND ROSE UNDEAD! NOW I LIVED AGAIN, BUT I WAS DYING...! AND MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD -- THE EVIL CREATURE I'D CREATED WITH A VAMPIRIC KISS FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO -- REIGNED OVER ME AT LAST! AND OH, HOW SHE MOCKED MY SAD CONDITION... AS WELL SHE MIGHT, FOR I HAD ENGINEERED IT! I, ANDREW BENNETT..."

I...VAMPIRE!™

THE FINAL CHAPTER: "DREAMS of DEATH!"

RIGOR MORTIS, ANDREW -- THE STIFFNESS OF *DEATH!* THAT IS THE FATE YOU'VE BROUGHT UPON YOURSELF BY TAKING THE *RUSSIAN FORMULA!*

BUT HOW COULD YOU HAVE FORESEEN THAT, WHEN YOU HAD NOT READ THE *COMPLETE* FILE?

WHAT? NO ANSWER FROM YOU, MY PRECIOUS?

AH, HOW SWEET IS YOUR *SILENCE* -- AND THE *CHILL* OF YOUR FLESH! AND DO YOU *LOVE* ME, ANDREW...?

DO YOU LOVE ME STILL?

DAN MISHKIN + GARY COHN WRITERS / TOM SUTTON ARTIST / BEN ODA - LETTERER ADRIENNE ROY - COLORIST / KAREN BERGER EDITOR / CREATED BY J.M. DeMATTEIS

"LOVE HER? NO, I COULD NOT... WITH LIFE'S BRIEF RETURN I HAD FINALLY LOST THAT CENTURIES-OLD PASSION!

"AND HERE IN A RUINED HOUSE OF GOD NEAR PARIS, MARY STOOD REVEALED AS THE UNHOLY, IRREDEEMABLE ENEMY!"

I SUPPOSE I SHALL MISS YOU, *ANDREW*, WHEN YOU'RE MAKING LOVE TO THE *EARTHWORMS*...

BUT THEN I'LL ALWAYS HAVE A *REMINDER* OF YOU BY MY SIDE!

ANDREW! WHAT HAVE THEY DONE--

SILENCE, *DEBORAH DANCER!* YOUR BRAVE HERO HAS SEALED HIS OWN FATE BY IMPETUOUSLY *INGESTING* THE SOVIET FORMULA...

...THE SERUM THAT WAS TO MAKE VAMPIRES WHO WERE *FREE FROM BLOODLUST* AND DEADLY DAYLIGHT!

BUT NONE OF US DARED TEST IT ON OURSELVES AFTER WE LEARNED--

--THAT IT WAS *NEVER* MEANT TO BE TAKEN BY ONE WHO WAS *ALREADY A VAMPIRE!*

"NO! DEBORAH HAD *WARNED ME! BUT I...* "

BUT WITH YOU OUT OF OUR WAY FOREVER, AND WITH THE INFORMATION YOU'VE GATHERED ADDED TO OURS--

--WE CAN PATIENTLY DEVELOP A VARIATION THAT *WILL* WORK ON US!

2

NOW YOU MUST *WATCH*, ANDREW, WHILE YOU STILL HAVE SIGHT...

...WATCH ME DO SOMETHING I HAVE *LONGED* TO DO FOR *SO MANY YEARS!*

SINCE FIRST YOU JOINED THE WAR AGAINST ME AS A *FRIGHTENED CHILD*, SWEET DEBORAH, I HAVE WANTED TO *POSSESS* YOU ...

...TO STEAL YOU FROM *HIM* AND MAKE YOU ONE OF THE *BLOOD RED MOON!*

NO!

YES, MY LOVELY, YOU WILL BE *MINE*...

NOOOOOAAARRGH!

...AND *MINE* ALONE!

MY *SLAVE*...

"AS DEBORAH *SCREAMED* I *STRUGGLED* TO *MOVE*--

"--TO SUMMON A *LAST RESERVE* OF *STRENGTH* AND *WILL!*

"BUT IT WAS TOO LITTLE...

"...TOO LITTLE FOR MARY TO SHOW EVEN A HINT OF FEAR...

"AND FAR, FAR TOO LATE...!"

POOR ANDREW... HE CANNOT RESCUE HIS *LADY FAIR* FROM THE *WICKED WITCH!*

YOUR DEBORAH IS *GONE* NOW... *DEAD.*

BUT IN *THREE NIGHTS* SHE WILL RISE A *VAMPIRE*-- A *FAITHFUL SERVANT* TO MY EVERY NEED!

AND YOU LIE THERE STILL *CLINGING TO HOPE*... BELIEVING THAT WHEN THE *TEMPORARY* STATE OF RIGOR MORTIS PASSES YOU WILL *LEAP UP AND SLAY ME!*

BUT IT WILL NOT BE! THIS TIME YOU HAVE DIED THE *TRUE DEATH*...

...OR AT LEAST YOUR *BODY* HAS!

BUT YOUR *EYES* STILL LIVE AND YOUR *MIND* STILL GOES ON -- FOR HOW LONG NONE CAN TELL...

THUS YOU MAY WATCH AND PLAN, HOPE AND DREAM... *HELPLESSLY!* AND THAT WILL BE MY *CRUELEST VENGEANCE!*

YOU WILL WATCH AND DO *NOTHING*-- AND *I* WILL WATCH TOO...

...AS YOUR BODY *ROTS* IN *RAPID DECOMPOSITION*--AS IT WITHERS AND SHRIVELS AND *CRUMBLES TO DUST!*

4

SO IF YOU HAVE *DREAMS, ANDREW BENNETT,* DREAM THEM NOW! DREAM OF YOUR *FOUR HUNDRED YEARS,* DREAM OF YOUR *MARY...*

DREAM OF ALL YOUR *FRIENDS* AND HOW I HAVE *DESTROYED THEM* ONE BY ONE!

DREAM OF *DEBORAH* AND THE FATE I HAVE IN STORE FOR HER...!

"MARY LAUGHED AND I-- MY FEVERED MIND TRAPPED IN MY OWN ROTTING CORPSE--

"--I DREAMED... OF A NIGHT IN THE YEAR 1591... OF THE DARK RITE OF MY INITIATION--

"--INTO THE RANKS OF THE UNDEAD!

"IN DROWSY MEMORY I SAW MY MARY OFFER TO SHARE MY CURSE IN THE NAME OF LOVE...

"...TO LET ME DRINK DEEP OF HER BLOOD, THAT WE MIGHT SPEND ETERNITY TOGETHER!

"AND I SAW AGAIN THE PERVERSE TRUTH AS MARY ROSE, TRANSFORMED FROM LOVING INNOCENCE--

"-- INTO A WILLING, WICKED CREATURE OF HELL!

5

"MY MIND REPLAYED HER EVIL HISTORY, HER GATHERING TOGETHER OF THE BLOOD RED MOON --

"... AND MY CEASELESS PURSUIT OF HER THROUGH CENTURIES OF TERROR!

"CEASELESS PURSUIT... AND ALWAYS, ULTIMATELY, FUTILE ...!

"I DREAMED NOW OF THOSE GOOD AND TRUE FRIENDS WHO HAD JOINED MY LONELY CRUSADE...

"... AND WHO HAD FALLEN AT MY SIDE, LIKE DMITRI MISHKIN, VICTIMS OF THE VAMPIRIC MENACE THEY HAD STALKED!

"I DREAMED OF THE LAST OF THESE -- OF DEBORAH -- AND OF MARY'S FANGS SINKING INTO HER THROAT AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN...!

"AND I SAW BLOOD... OCEANS OF BLOOD AND MORE AND MORE...

"... THE SCARLET TEARS OF SOULS LOST AND DEAD...

6

"AND IN THE BLEAKEST DESPAIR--I WOKE..."

MY DARLING ANDREW, I TRUST YOUR SLEEP WAS AS *GLORIOUS* AS MINE!

I DREAMT WONDERFUL VISIONS OF *POWER!*

ARE YOU THERE, ANDREW, OR DO YOU SLEEP IN *OBLIVION* NOW?

NO... I SEE BY YOUR *EYES* THAT YOU ARE STILL WITH US!

IF ONLY *YOU* COULD SEE YOURSELF IN YOUR *LOATHSOME CREPITATION*- NOTHING BUT A *MOULDER-ING CORPSE!*

"THEN SUDDENLY--SOMEHOW--I *COULD* SEE MYSELF! AS THOUGH *LIFTED OUTSIDE* MY OWN BODY, I LOOKED DOWN FROM ABOVE...

"... AND FELT MY HORROR AND *REVULSION* REBORN!"

IT DIDN'T HAVE TO COME TO THIS, YOU KNOW...

WE NEEDN'T HAVE BEEN *FOES* IF ONLY YOU'D *ACCEPTED* YOUR *VAMPIRIC URGES!*

I *LOVED* YOU, ANDREW... I *GAVE UP MY LIFE* FOR YOU!

AND I WOULD LOVE YOU STILL IF YOU HAD CHOSEN TO *RULE AT MY SIDE* RATHER THAN OPPOSE ME!

I HAVE SOMETIMES *DREAMED* OF IT-- THE TWO OF US *TOGETHER*, SHARING THE *TASTE OF BLOOD* IN EACH OTHER'S KISSES!

"SUCH A DREAM AS SHE DESCRIBED WAS MY MOST **AWFUL NIGHTMARE!** THAT I KNEW WITH CERTAINTY--FOR I HAD DREAMED IT TOO...

7

"AND NOW I COULD NOT STOP MYSELF FROM DREAMING IT AGAIN...!

"...I SAW MARY AND MYSELF AS A VAMPIRIC DUO--FIRST GOING IN STEALTH, THE HATED MARAUDERS OF THE NIGHT, THE PURSUED AS MUCH AS THE PURSUERS...

"...BUT THEN OVERCOMING OUR HUNTERS AND OUR RIVALS TOGETHER, BUILDING THE BLOOD RED MOON--USHERING IN FOUR CENTURIES OF CONQUEST!

"WE ARE THE SCOURGE OF THE WORLD AS WE FOLLOW OUR DARK DREAM--LEADING A RACE OF VAMPIRES WHO RULE MANKIND AS WOLVES WOULD RULE A RACE OF SHEEP!

"IN THIS NIGHTMARE OF DEPRAVED DESIRE, I AM THE VAMPIRE LORD OF THE EARTH, LOVED UNDYINGLY BY MY QUEEN OF BLOOD!

"THEN MARY BRINGS ME A GIFT--A SPECIAL PRIZE THAT I HAVE LONG SOUGHT AFTER...!

"IT IS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WHO DESPITE HER YOUTH HAS BEEN MY ENEMY FOR MORE THAN A DECADE!

"SHE HAS LED A RESISTANCE TO THE BLOOD RED MOON... A GUERRILLA MOVEMENT THAT HAS TRIED TO UNDERMINE OUR DOMINATION OF THE PLANET..

"...AND WHICH HAS AT LAST BEEN CRUSHED -- TOTALLY AND WITHOUT MERCY!

"SHE STANDS TERRIFIED AND HUMILIATED BEFORE ME! I FEEL UNHOLY APPETITES WELL UP WITHIN...

"AND THEN I SPEAK..."

YOUR FACE IS FILLED WITH TERROR, WOMAN, BUT I KNOW THE TRUTH...!

YOU HAVE *WANTED* ME TO COME TO YOU LIKE THIS, AS I HAVE WANTED *YOU*!

YOU HAVE *LONGED FOR MY EMBRACE*, HAVE YOU NOT...

...DEBORAH DANCER?

"MY COLD FANGS PIERCE TENDER FLESH AND I DELIGHT IN HER SCREAMS --

"...AND IN THE SWEET, HOT RICHNESS OF HER BLOOD!

"HER BLOOD IS MINE... HER FLESH IS MINE...! HER SOUL TURNED RED BY THE ENDLESS GUSH OF LIFE'S PRECIOUS FLUID IS MINE!

"AND AT LAST HER SCREAM--THE WAIL OF HUMANITY LOST TO ETERNAL DAMNATION--IS MINE AS WELL...!

"I WOKE TO FIND THAT ANOTHER DAY HAD PASSED--AND THAT MY TORMENTOR REMAINED..."

SOON IT WILL *END*, MY DEAR *CADAVER!* IF I *BLEW* ON YOU, YOU WOULD *CRUMBLE TO DUST!*

*EEEE

"THEN THROUGH MY OWN HOLLOW SKULL I SEEMED TO RISE--NOT DREAMING OF A PLACE THAT I HAD OR MIGHT HAVE SEEN --

"--BUT ESCAPING TOWARD A NEW REALITY!

"THIS, I KNEW, WAS THE PATHWAY TO THE REALM OF DEATH-- THAT UNMAPPED COUNTRY I SHOULD HAVE GONE TO CENTURIES AGO!

"ENTERING AN IMMENSE TUNNEL, I RACED TOWARD THE WONDERFUL BRIGHT LIGHT THAT SHONE AHEAD --AND FELT ITS WARMTH ENSHROUD ME AS I APPROACHED!

"MY VERY SENSE OF SELF WAS DISSOLVING INTO THE IRRESISTIBLE TIDE OF LOVE AND WARMTH!

"AND I REALIZED THAT ALL MY STRUGGLES HAD BEEN BUT A MINOR TURBULENCE IN THE FACE OF THAT VAST SEA OF LIGHT...

"I LET THE SHELL OF EGO CRACK -- AND SURRENDERED TO THE SWEET FOREVER WHERE 'BENNETT' WOULD BE NO MORE...

"... THAT EVIL AT ITS UTMOST WAS NO MORE THAN A TINY, DIRTY, INSIGNIFICANT THING IN THE FACE OF THE UNIVERSAL ALL!

"FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FOUR HUNDRED YEARS I KNEW PEACE...

11

"...BUT THEN I WOKE!

"MY ENTIRE BEING MOURNED THAT IT HAD ONLY BEEN A DREAM... BUT THE REAL WORLD HAD CALLED ME BACK...

"...AND MARY WAS THERE...!"

WHAT A *PATHETIC ENDING* FOR YOU, ANDREW... AND HOW I DO *SAVOR* IT.!

LOOK AT YOURSELF! YOU ARE SO FAR GONE THAT A *GRAVE OF FRESH EARTH* WOULD *SPIT* YOU OUT!

"AGAIN I SAW MYSELF, AS IF *REMOVED* FROM THAT *PUTRID CORPSE*... SAW THE LONG CENTURIES OF *DEFERRED DEATH* TAKING THEIR GRIM TOLL...!

"THE FORMULA HAD REAWAKENED MY LONG-ATROPHIED ORGANS, MY HUMAN BODILY FUNCTIONS...

"BUT SUCH THINGS COULD NOT TRULY BE RENEWED AFTER FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF DISUSE WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT THEY WOULD WORK FOR VERY LONG!

"THEN HOW, I ASKED MYSELF, WAS THE SERUM INTENDED TO BE USED...?

"FOR WHOM WAS IT MEANT...?"

I AM HERE AS YOU COMMANDED, *QUEEN OF BLOOD!*

AT LAST *MY TRIUMPH* OVER YOU IS *COMPLETE*, ANDREW!

YOUR DARLING DEBORAH IS *MINE!*

"DEBORAH SAID NOTHING NOW-- BUT IN HER WIDENED EYES I THOUGHT I DETECTED A GLIMMER, A HOPE."

12

"I TRIED TO SPEAK, TO SAY HER NAME, BUT ONLY A SICKLY RASP EMERGED FROM MY DEAD THROAT..."

COME CLOSER, DEBORAH, AND SHOW HIM... SHOW HIM WHO YOUR MISTRESS IS NOW.

"I PLEADED FOR THE GOD THAT MY VERY EXISTENCE HAD MOCKED TO TAKE ME THEN -- TO SPARE ME THIS FINAL TESTIMONY TO MY FAILURE..."

LET HIM WITNESS THE COMING OF DEBORAH DANCER...

... VAMPIRE!

ANDREW BENNETT...!

MY POOR, POOR ANDREW...

WHAT!? YOU STILL RETAIN FEELING FOR THIS GARBAGE -- FOR THIS FEAST FOR MAGGOTS?!

I WILL NOT ALLOW IT! YOU ARE A SERVANT OF THE QUEEN OF BLOOD...

AND FOR YOUR QUEEN'S PLEASURE YOU WILL SAVAGE BENNETT'S BODY AND GIVE ME HIS HEAD!

ALL THAT I'LL DO, YOU FOUL, HATEFUL CREATURE...

...IS DESTROY YOU!

"THE SAME QUESTION PASSED THROUGH MY MIND AS DEBORAH POUNCED...

NO! HOW CAN YOU RESIST MY POWER!?

"HOW COULD THIS BE SO? I HAD SEEN DEBORAH'S GLISTENING FANGS--

"--AND CLEARLY SHE WAS POSSESSED OF VAMPIRIC STRENGTH...

"BUT HER SEEMINGLY EFFORTLESS DEFIANCE OF MARY'S EVIL WILL GAVE ME PAUSE TO WONDER--

"--JUST WHAT SORT OF VAMPIRE SHE HAD BECOME...!"

YOU CAUGHT ME BY *SURPRISE*, DEBORAH DANCER, BUT WHEN NEXT WE BATTLE, I SHALL *CRUSH YOU!*

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THERE'LL *BE* A NEXT TIME?

HA! YOU *LITTLE FOOL*, YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN!

DAWN HAS COME AND THE SUN WILL TAKE US BOTH IF WE CONTINUE!

THE SITUATION WAS THE SAME WHEN BENNETT FIRST RESCUED YOU FROM *ME*, WAS IT NOT?

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"SO IT HAD BEEN... MARY WAS FORCED TO GIVE UP DEBORAH AS HER PREY THOSE FOURTEEN YEARS AGO TO SAVE HERSELF FROM THE ONCOMING DAY...

"AND NOW DEBORAH COULD ONLY ENSURE MARY'S DESTRUCTION IF SHE WOULD WILLINGLY SHARE HER FATE!

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S GOT A LESSON COMING, BLOODSUCKER!

COME WITH ME, MARY...

NO! NO, YOU'LL FINISH US BOTH!

THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG! IT'S TRUE I'M A VAMPIRE NOW, BUT I'M NOT ONE OF YOURS!

THERE WAS A SECOND DOSE OF SERUM IN THE PACKET ANDREW STOLE FROM THE RUSSIANS... AND I TOOK IT!

I'D THOUGHT AND THOUGHT ABOUT THE FORMULA, TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW THE SOVIETS PLANNED TO USE IT-- AND THEN FINALLY I REALIZED...

IT WAS MEANT TO BE TAKEN BY A LIVING PERSON WHO WOULD THEN BE TURNED VAMPIRIC!

I HAD WANTED ANDREW TO BITE ME SO THAT WE COULD SPEND ETERNITY TOGETHER...

15

BUT THAT WAS BEFORE I KNEW THE *TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES* THAT HE WAS GOING TO SUFFER.!

EVEN WITH THE SERUM, HIS BODY COULDN'T BE *BROUGHT BACK TO REAL LIFE*...

BUT *MY* ORGANS NEVER ATROPHIED... *MY* BODY *NEVER DIED!*

AND NOW THE SERUM WILL KEEP ME *IMMORTAL* AS A *LIVING VAMPIRE* FOR WHOM THE SUN HOLDS NO TERROR!

BUT FOR *YOU, QUEEN OF HELL,* THE FIRES OF THE RISING SUN ARE *DEATH!*

I ONLY WISH YOUR *TORMENT* COULD LAST LONGER, SO THAT YOU COULD BEGIN TO PAY FOR *ALL THE PAIN* YOU'VE CAUSED AND THE LIVES THAT YOU'VE DESTROYED.

BUT THIS WILL HAVE TO DO!

IT'S *OVER,* MARY! I'VE *HATED YOU* FOR SO LONG AND FOR SO MANY REASONS--

AND AT TIMES THAT HATE THREATENED TO *CONSUME ME!*

MAYBE I'LL REDISCOVER HOW EASY IT WAS TO *LOVE* INSTEAD OF HATE NOW THAT I HAVE *ETERNITY* AHEAD OF ME...

...AND NOW THAT *YOU'RE GONE!*

16

ASHES TO ASHES, MARY...

AND SO MUCH FOR THE *QUEEN OF BLOOD!*

ANDREW...

IT'S DONE, ANDREW-- YOUR MISSION IS *FINISHED!*

AND YOU CAN DIE--

--IN PEACE...!

"I COULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED HOW GLAD I WOULD BE TO FACE DEATH FINALLY...

"BUT IN THESE LAST DAYS I HAVE REPLAYED MY LIFE AND UNDEATH A HUNDRED TIMES-- AND IT ALL SEEMS A STRANGE, WAKING DREAM...

"I WELCOME ITS END."

ANDREW, CAN YOU STILL *HEAR* ME? I WANT TO TELL YOU--

--THAT *I LOVE* YOU... THAT I'LL *ALWAYS* LOVE YOU.

17

"I TRY TO SPEAK-- BUT WORDS WILL NOT COME..."

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY IT, ANDREW-- I KNOW...

I KNOW YOU LOVE ME TOO

"AND IN THIS MOMENT I AM FREE, MY CONSCIOUS CLEAR--

"--A PYRE FOR THE SLEEPING SINNERS OF THE BLOOD RED MOON WITHIN...

"THE EARLY MORNING GLOWS EVEN BRIGHTER AS THE OLD CATHEDRAL SERVES ONE LAST HOLY FUNCTION...

"--WAITING TO RETURN TO THAT GREAT LIGHT WHERE MY SOUL AND MY SUFFERING WILL MELT AWAY IN THE ONENESS BEYOND!

"AND I, ANDREW BENNETT, CAN ONLY WHISPER A BLESSING UPON MY LOVE -- UPON THE VAMPIRIC DEBORAH DANCER --

"--BEFORE MY SPIRIT RUSHES APART... AND WHIRLS INTO INFINITY..."

The End

18

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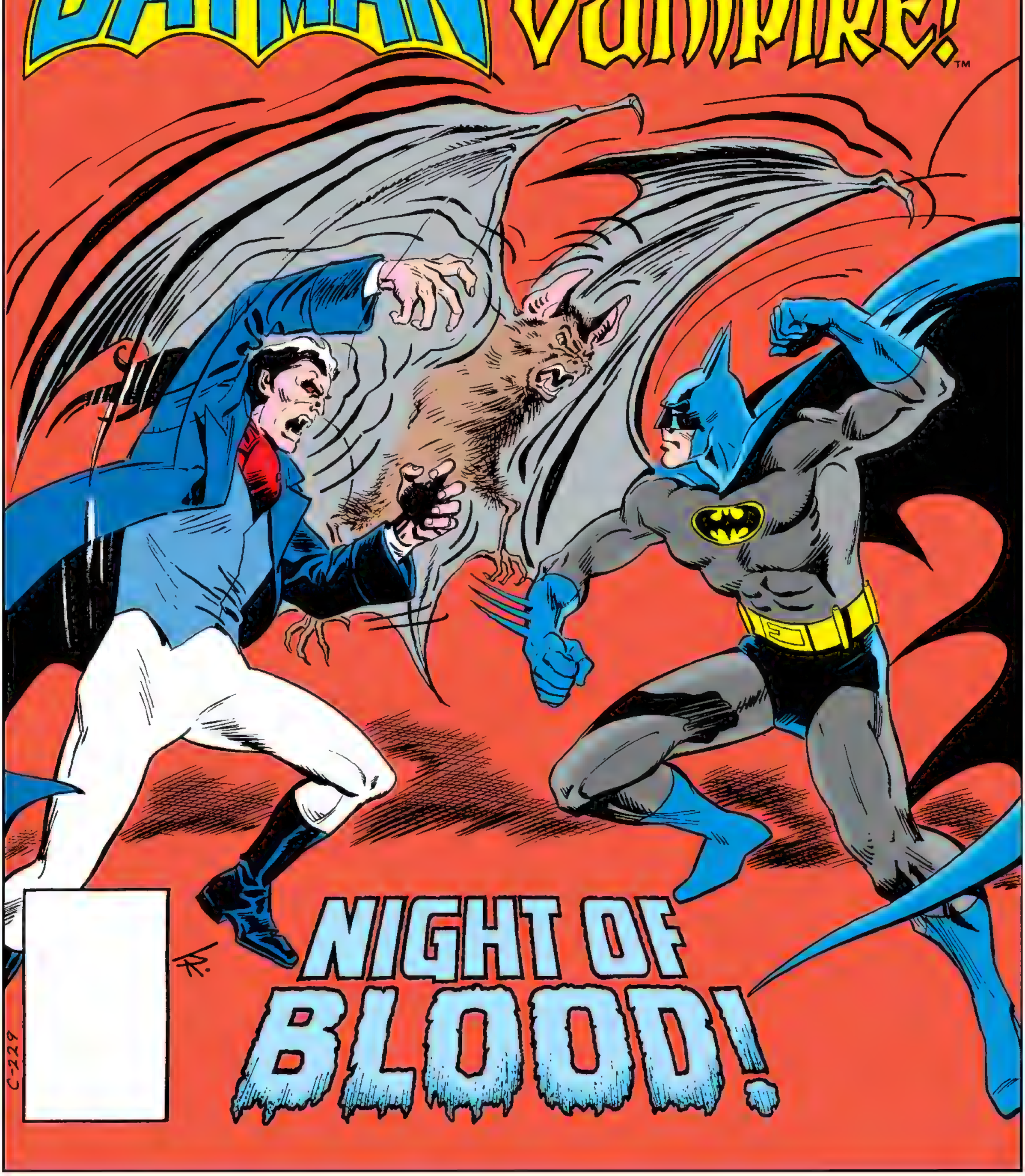
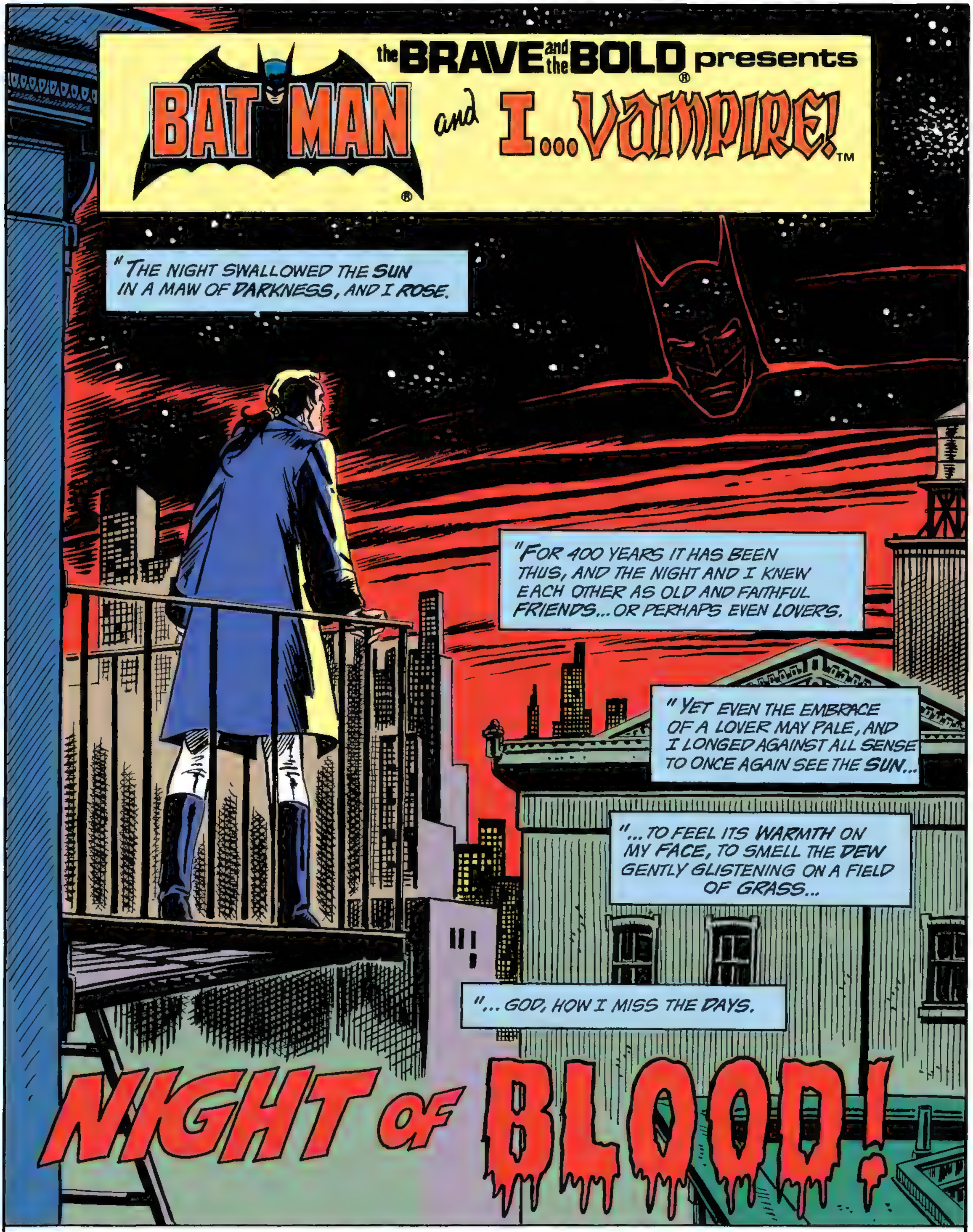


NIGHT OF BLOOD!


the BRAVE and the BOLD presents
BAT MAN
and I...VAMPIRE!™
"THE NIGHT SWALLOWED THE SUN IN A MAW OF DARKNESS, AND I ROSE.
"FOR 400 YEARS IT HAS BEEN THUS, AND THE NIGHT AND I KNEW EACH OTHER AS OLD AND FAITHFUL FRIENDS...OR PERHAPS EVEN LOVERS.
"YET EVEN THE EMBRACE OF A LOVER MAY PALE, AND I LONGED AGAINST ALL SENSE TO ONCE AGAIN SEE THE SUN...
"...TO FEEL ITS WARMTH ON MY FACE, TO SMELL THE DEW GENTLY GLISTENING ON A FIELD OF GRASS...
"...GOD, HOW I MISS THE DAYS.
NIGHT OF BLOOD!
MIKE W. BARR WRITER • JIM APARO ARTIST • ADRIENNE ROY COLORIST • LEN WEIN EDITOR

CHAPTER 1: BLOOD FEUD

"I HAVE COME TO THIS CITY CALLED GOTHAM, TO THIS HOTEL WHERE NO QUESTIONS WILL BE ASKED...

"...FOR MY OWN GOOD REASONS.

"AND IF I MUST USE THOSE ABILITIES WHICH I LOATH TO ACHIEVE MY GOALS...

"...THEN I MUST. BUT DO NOT PITY ME...

"...FOR THOSE VERY QUALITIES THAT I SO DESPISE...

"...MAKE ME MOST EFFECTIVE IN FIGHTING THE EVIL THAT DWELLS IN THE NIGHT.

THE GOTHAM GAZETTE

POLICE DENY "VAMPIRE KILLINGS"

"I LANDED IN THIS DANK CAVERN OF TREES, TRANSFORMED FROM BAT TO WOLF...

"...AND WAITED. GOTHAM PARK WAS AN EXCELLENT SPOT FOR ASSAULTS BY THE UNDEAD, ASSAULTS HIDDEN UNDER THE GUISE OF ORDINARY CRIME..."

HURRY UP, JIMMY! MY OLD MAN SAYS IT'S NOT SAFE HERE AFTER DARK!

"...AND MORE THAN ONE THING MAY HIDE..."

DON'T WORRY, DONNA! ANY MUGGERS ATTACK, I'LL PROTECT YOU!

MY HERO!

"...'NEATH A FACADE OF INNOCENCE."

TEE HEE

AGGGGH-!

"THE ENEMY HAD STRUCK...

3

"...AS I PREDICTED, FROM BE-NEATH A MOST EFFECTIVE FACADE."

DON'T STRUGGLE, OLD MAN, AND IT WON'T--

GRRRR

LOOK OUT!

IS--IS HE ONE OF US, COME TO SHARE OUR FEAST?

HE IS A TRAITOR TO OUR CAUSE!

ANY AFFRONTS CAST BY SUCH AS YOU...

...ARE ONLY COMPLIMENTS TO ANDREW BENNETT!

BENNETT?

WE WERE WARNED OF HIS POSSIBLE INTERFERENCE!

SNAP

YES--AND TOLD OF THE REWARD FOR HIS ETERNAL DEATH! IT WILL NOW BE OURS!

PERHAPS!

"AS I SUSPECTED, SHE WAS HERE AS WELL! THAT WAS A VALUABLE BIT OF INFORMATION...

4

"...PROVIDED I SURVIVED TO UTILIZE IT."

SLAY HIM, JAMES!

"I TURNED TO FACE THE BOY, AS THEY EXPECTED...

"...THEN DID THE UNEXPECTED, BY TURNING TO MIST."

NO, DON'T FIRE! DON'T--

BANG

BANG

"TOO LATE! THE BULLETS-- SILVER, AS I SUSPECTED-- REMOVED ONE THREAT...

"...AND I REMOVED THE SECOND.

GAAAAK

CHOK

"I WATCHED AGAIN AS YOUNG FLESH SEAMED AND CRUMBLED IN FINAL DEATH...

"...THOUGH I HAVE NEVER, THANK HEAVEN, BECOME USED TO IT.

"THE BOY WAS A MUCH YOUNGER VAMPIRE, AND A SEARCH OF HIS CLOTHES PROVED MOST ENLIGHTENING.

"I SAID A SILENT --AND PERHAPS USELESS-- PRAYER FOR THE PITIFUL CREATURES I HAD DISPATCHED...

CLUB DRACULA

"...THEN I WAS ON MY WAY."

CHAPTER 2: BLOOD IS THICKER...

DOES SHE REQUIRE A *HOSPITAL*, DR. WEEMS? IF SO, MY PRIVATE *AMBULANCE* CAN HAVE HER THERE IN--

I'VE TOLD YOU *BEFORE*, MR. HODGES...

...EVERYTHING THAT *CAN* BE DONE, YOU'VE SUPPLIED THE EQUIPMENT FOR! A TRIP TO THE HOSPITAL WOULD ONLY *WORSEN* HER CONDITION!

OF COURSE, YOU'VE *SAID* THAT! I'M *SORRY*, DOCTOR...

...BUT ONE IS APT TO FUNCTION SOMEWHAT LESS *EFFICIENTLY*...

...WHEN ONE'S DAUGHTER IS DYING OF A *VAMPIRE'S BITE*!

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WE DON'T KNOW THAT FOR A *FACT*, HODGES -- NOT *YET!*

AH, AT *LAST--!*

LOOK *OUT*, BOSS!

IT'S THE BAT-- *UNNNGH!*

CALL HIM *OFF*, HODGES... TELL HIM YOU *INVITED* ME HERE --

--BEFORE HE HAS TO LEARN TO TIE HIS SHOES WITH *ONE HAND!*

AAWWKK

THAT'S *ENOUGH*, LESTER!

THANK YOU FOR *COMING*, BATMAN! I REALIZE OUR RELATIONS HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN *AMICABLE*...

I DON'T WORRY ABOUT BEING A *GOOD NEIGHBOR* TO *GANGSTERS*, HODGES!

NO, YOU CERTAINLY CAN'T BE ACCUSED OF *HYPOCRISY*... BUT WE *NEED* EACH OTHER NOW! MY DAUGHTER IS *DYING*, BATMAN, OF--

I *OVERHEARD* YOUR CONVERSATION, HODGES...

...AND IF THAT'S *TRUE*, IT MAKES HER THE ONLY VICTIM WHO'S *SURVIVED! COMMISSIONER GORDON* AND THE *BOARD OF HEALTH* SHOULD BE TOLD!

I DON'T *CARE* ABOUT THEM, BATMAN...

...ONLY MY *DAUGHTER!* I CAN'T *LOSE* HER, NOW THAT I FINALLY HAVE TIME TO BE A *FATHER* TO HER!

WHERE DO *I* FIT IN?

I PROPOSE A *DEAL*, BATMAN! YOU USE YOUR SCIENTIFIC AND DETECTIVE KNOWLEDGE TO *CURE* MY DAUGHTER...

...AND I'LL HAND YOU MY ENTIRE FILE ON *JOHNNY GUNNARSON* --"JOHNNY THE GUN!"

THAT *IS* TEMPTING...

ALL RIGHT-- IT'S A *DEAL*, HODGES! BUT HOW DO I KNOW YOU WON'T GO BACK ON YOUR *WORD*? YOU AND JOHNNY ARE PRETTY *TIGHT!*

YES, WE ARE *ASSOCIATES*, BATMAN! BUT THAT'S *BUSINESS*...

...AND THIS IS *BLOOD!*

MR. GUNNARSON... THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD *KNOW*...

SOMETIMES I THINK I NEVER SHOULD HAVE *RETURNED* TO OFFICE, BATMAN! AS IF *ORDINARY* CRIME ISN'T ENOUGH, NOW *THIS*--!

DO YOU HAVE THOSE *PHOTOS* I ASKED FOR, COMMISSIONER?

GOTHAM COUNTY MORGUE

HERE, BATMAN! I HOPE THEY'RE OF MORE USE TO *YOU* THEN THEY WERE TO MY *STAFF*!

THAT WOULDN'T *SURPRISE* ME, COMMISSIONER...

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING IN THE PHOTOS THAT WILL HELP END THESE--THESE "*VAMPIRE KILLINGS*," BATMAN, PLEASE *SAY SO*!

NOTHING THAT WILL HELP *YOU*-- NOT *YET*...

...BUT I DO SEE SOMETHING THAT WILL HELP *ME*!

WHAT *IS* IT, BATMAN?

BATMAN--?

LORD, IT'S GOOD TO BE *BACK*!

CHAPTER 3: BLOOD TIES

"DRACULA! HOW I HATE THAT NAME! FOR DECADES, HIS IMAGE HAS SOFTENED AND ROMANTICIZED THE PLAGUE THAT IS VAMPIRISM...

CLUB DRACULA

"...WHEN IN TRUTH IT IS A CURSE...

Enter Freely and of your Own Will

"...THAT MAKES ETERNAL DAMNATION SEEM A WELCOME RELIEF BY COMPARISON."

"I TELL MYSELF THAT THEY DO NOT FULLY COMPREHEND THE NATURE OF THE CURSE THEY ALMOST SEEM TO WORSHIP. I MUST TELL MYSELF THIS...

"...FOR I HAVE WORK TO DO, AND I MUST REMAIN CALM."

HEY, THERE'S SOME NEW BLOOD, BABY! WATCH ME PUT THE BITE ON HIM!

HEE HEE! DO IT, MARK!

GRRREEEETINGS, MORTAL! I HAVEN'T HAD A BITE IN DAYS! MAY I--

WHAT--?

GAAAK!

NO! STAY AWAY--

RAKKTT

PUT ME DOWN, MAN!

I WAS JUST *KIDDIN'* YOU! NO NEED TO *FREAK OUT* ON ME!

I'M *SORRY*...

...MY SENSE OF HUMOR ISN'T WHAT IT *USED* TO BE!

NO PROBLEM! HEY, HOW ABOUT JOININ' US FOR A *BLOODY MARY*! MY NAME'S *TANNER*, AND--

I THINK *NOT*... NOT *TONIGHT*!

WELL, EXCUUUSE *ME*!

"I HAD NO TIME TO DRINK WITH THEM, EVEN IF I HAD THE *DESIRE*. I COULD SENSE THE PRESENCE OF *TRUE* VAMPIRES HERE...

"...HERE IN THIS MOST PERFECT OF *HIDING PLACES*...

"...OF COURSE, THAT ALSO MEANT THAT *THEY* COULD SENSE ME...

"...AND PERHAPS THE FACT THAT OUR GOALS WERE FAR FROM THE *SAME*."

PERRIER, PLEASE.

?

CLUB DRACU
MEMBERS
PARK IN REA

12

PUT ME THROUGH T' *GUNNARSON!* IT'S ABOUT THE *ALERT* HE CALLED...

SEEMS A LITTLE STRANGE TO BE CHECKING OUT *FAKE* VAMPIRES WHEN THERE MAY BE *REAL* ONES ABOUT...

...BUT THAT'S THE KEY TO SAVING HODGES' *DAUGHTER!*

THE MARKS ON HER THROAT WEREN'T MADE BY *REAL* TEETH... THEY WERE MUCH TOO *REGULAR* FOR THAT...

...THEY WERE MADE BY CHEAP *FAKE FANGS*-- AND THIS CLUB'S GOT A CORNER ON *THAT* MARKET!

THERE HE IS!

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IT IS HE-- BENNETT!

"MY INSTINCTS HAD BEEN CORRECT..."

COME, BENNETT... WE WOULD SPEAK WITH YOU!

"...THE CLUB DRACULA WAS A HIDING PLACE -- A "SAFE HOUSE" -- FOR HER OPERATIVES...

"...I ONLY HOPED THOSE INSTINCTS HAD NOT LED ME TO MY DEATH -- NOT YET."

'SCUSE US, SIR... MAY WE HAVE A WORD WITH YOU -- OUTSIDE?

TROUBLE!

ONCE THEY GET ME OUTSIDE, I'M DEAD! SO, AS MUCH AS I HATE TO ENDANGER INNOCENTS...

...THIS TIME I'VE GOT NO CHOICE!

DIDJA SEE THAT? THAT GUY TURNED... TURNED...

LOOK OUT, MARK!

OUT OF MY WAY, SON!

OW!

? OUT OF THE FRYING PAN...

"...INTO THE FIRE? NO, FOR I COULD SENSE THAT THESE MEN CARRIED NO SILVER...

"...AND THUS, THEIR BULLETS DID NO MORE DAMAGE THAN WOULD A PASSING BREEZE."

POW

BANG

RECENTLY, I'VE HAD MORE EXPERIENCE WITH VAMPIRES THAN I LIKE TO ADMIT...

15

...AND WHEN THESE "VAMPIRE MURDERS" STARTED POPPING UP, I DECIDED TO BE *PREPARED!*

YAGGGH

"AND WITH NO OTHER WEAPONS, THE GUNMEN PROVED NO TROUBLE AT ALL."

ANOTHER ONE? STAY BACK, OR--

I HAVE *HEARD* OF YOU, BATMAN, AND I WONDERED HOW I WOULD PROVE MY *INTENTIONS*, SHOULD OUR PATHS *CROSS*...

...AND NOW I *KNOW*! THESE GUNMEN PROVED NO THREAT TO *ME*, BUT I *DISPOSED* OF THEM...

...FOR THEY ENDANGERED *INNOCENTS*, BESIDES *YOURSELF!*

KEEP TALKING...

MY NAME IS *ANDREW BENNETT!* FOR 400 YEARS I HAVE WALKED THE EARTH, SPOILING THE PLANS OF MY FORMER LOVER, *MARY*...

...AND HER VAMPIRIC CONSPIRACY, *THE BLOOD-RED MOON!* I BELIEVE THEM TO BE HERE IN *GOTHAM* NOW...

...PREYING UPON *YOUR* CITY, BATMAN, *YOUR PEOPLE!* *JOIN* ME IN MY STRUGGLE. AND IF MY MARY FINALLY *DIES*...

...THEN YOU MAY USE THAT CROSS ON *ME!* INDEED, I WILL *BEG* YOU TO!

BENNETT...

16

...COME ON, WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO!

"I FOLLOWED HIM INTO THE STREET, PREPARED TO MOVE QUICKLY, BUT HE PAUSED..."

JUST A MINUTE, BENNETT-- I HAVE TO TALK WITH THAT HOOD!

W-WHAT DO YA WANT, BATMAN? I'M CLEAN, I SWEAR!

DON'T BOTHER WITH THE LIES, SHAKY-- I'M NOT HERE TO HASSLE YOU!

I KNOW HODGES SENT YOU TO KEEP AN EYE ON ME...

...BUT I NEED A SHADOW LESS THAN I NEED A DE-LIVERY BOY! TAKE THESE TO DR. WEEMS, NOW! TELL HIM TO CHECK THE DRIED SALIVA ON THE TEETH...

...FOR TRACES OF A BLOOD VIRUS THE OWNER OF THE FANGS IS CARRYING! HE BIT HODGES' DAUGHTER, PLAYING DRACULA...

...AND INFECTED HER! FORTUNATELY, THERE'S STILL TIME!

OH, AND TELL HIM TO PUT THAT NURSE UNDER RESTRAINTS, TOO! I THINK SHE'S A SPY! BUT DON'T HURT HER! GOT IT?

UH... GOT IT!

WELL, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

17

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE WONDERING WHERE WE'RE *GOING*, BENNETT...

SKREEE

...JOHNNY GUNNARSON'S MUSCLE-TYPES SHOWED UP AT THE CLUB DRACULA 'WAY TOO QUICKLY AFTER I *ARRIVED*...

...AS IF THEY WERE *ALREADY THERE!* THERE MAY BE SOME *CONNECTION* BETWEEN GUNNARSON AND THE VAMPIRE KILLINGS--

--AND IF SO, THAT MAKES GUNNARSON *BOTH* OUR CONCERNS!

"I REALIZED, FOR THE SECOND TIME IN AS MANY MINUTES, THAT THIS MAN WAS HARDLY MORE HUMAN THAN I WAS...

"...FOR HE WAS EASILY MY EQUAL IN **OBSESSION**, YET HE POSSESSED NO **SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES**. AND HE WAS LONELY, AS WAS I...

"...WHAT *TRAGEDY* WAS THERE IN HIS PAST THAT MADE HIM *DRIVE* HIMSELF SO? WHAT MADE HIM *CHOOSE* THE SOLITARY WORLD OF THE BATMAN?

"I DID NOT KNOW, AND I DOUBTED I EVER WOULD..."

THEY'RE *COMING*, JONATHAN...

NO *PROBLEM*, LOVE! WE'RE *READY* FOR 'EM!

18

LOOKS *DARK*, BUT THAT DOESN'T *MEAN* ANYTHING! REMEMBER THE *ADVANTAGE* I GAVE YOU, BENNETT-- *GOOD* LUCK!

YOU *TOO*, BATMAN!

HELLO, ANDREW *DEAR*!

I SUSPECTED OUR PATHS WOULD CROSS...

...*MARY*! YOU REALIZE I HAVE SWORN A BLOOD OATH TO *SLAY* YOU?

AND I YOU, ANDREW... AND I *YOU*!

IF GUNNARSON SENT SOME BOYS AFTER ME, HE SHOULD HAVE THIS PLACE GUARDED TO THE *TEETH*!

UNLESS...

GLAD TO SEE YOU HAVEN'T LOST ANY OF YOUR *SKILL*, GUNNARSON!

THANK YOU, BATMAN...

BANG

BANG

...BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, I'VE ADDED A *NEW WRINKLE*, AS WELL!

GUNNARSON, WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE*? YOU WERE *SCUM*, TRUE...

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...BUT AT LEAST YOU WERE *HUMAN!*

YOU SAY THAT AS THOUGH *PROUD*, BATMAN! BY COMBINING OUR RESOURCES, MARY AND I WILL RULE *GOTHAM*, AND THEN--

--AND THEN YOU'LL STILL *TALK TOO MUCH!*

AIEEEEEE

YOU'VE SLAIN ≥GASP≤ ME, BATMAN...

...BUT YOU'RE GOING *WITH* ME!

YOU CAN'T *WIN*, ANDREW... YOU NEVER--*AGGHH!*

NO, MARY... I LOST *FOUR* CENTURIES AGO!

BUT YOU'LL NOT CONTINUE YOUR UNDEAD EXISTENCE ANOTHER *NIGHT!*

AND AFTER YOU'RE DEAD --NEITHER WILL *I!* GOODBYE, MA--

HOLY WATER

AIEE EEEEE

BATMAN?!?

FOOLISH, ANDREW! LOVERS ARE A DIME A *DOZEN*...

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BUT I -- AND THE BLOOD-RED MOON -- MUST SURVIVE!

FAREWELL, ANDREW -- FOR NOW!

NO --!

DAMN YOU, CREATURE, LET HIM --

BENNETT, NO! HIS BULLETS ARE...

YAGG

BANG BANG

...ARE...

...SILVER!

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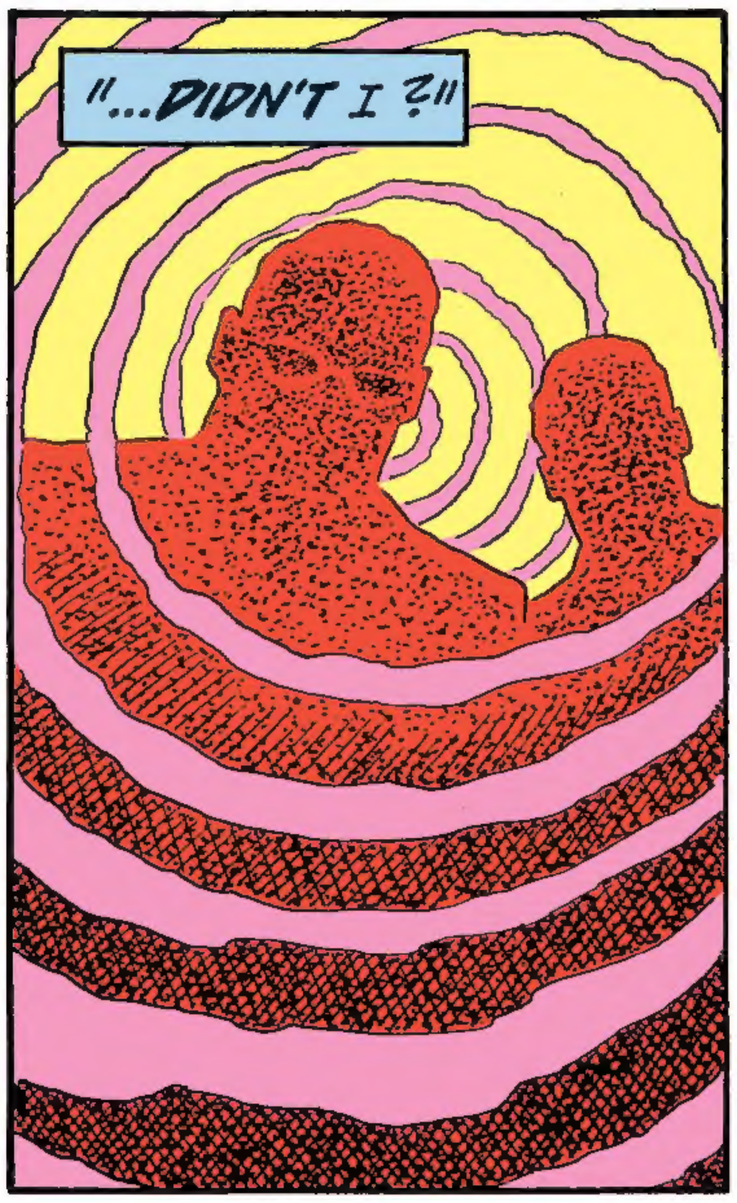
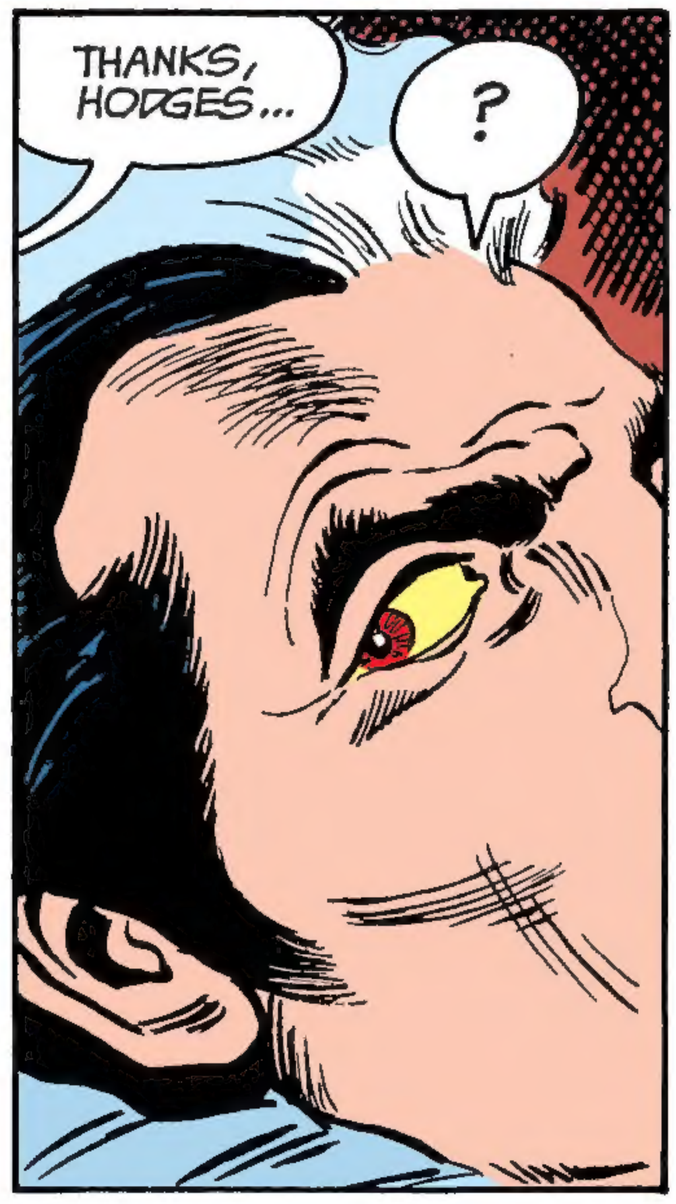
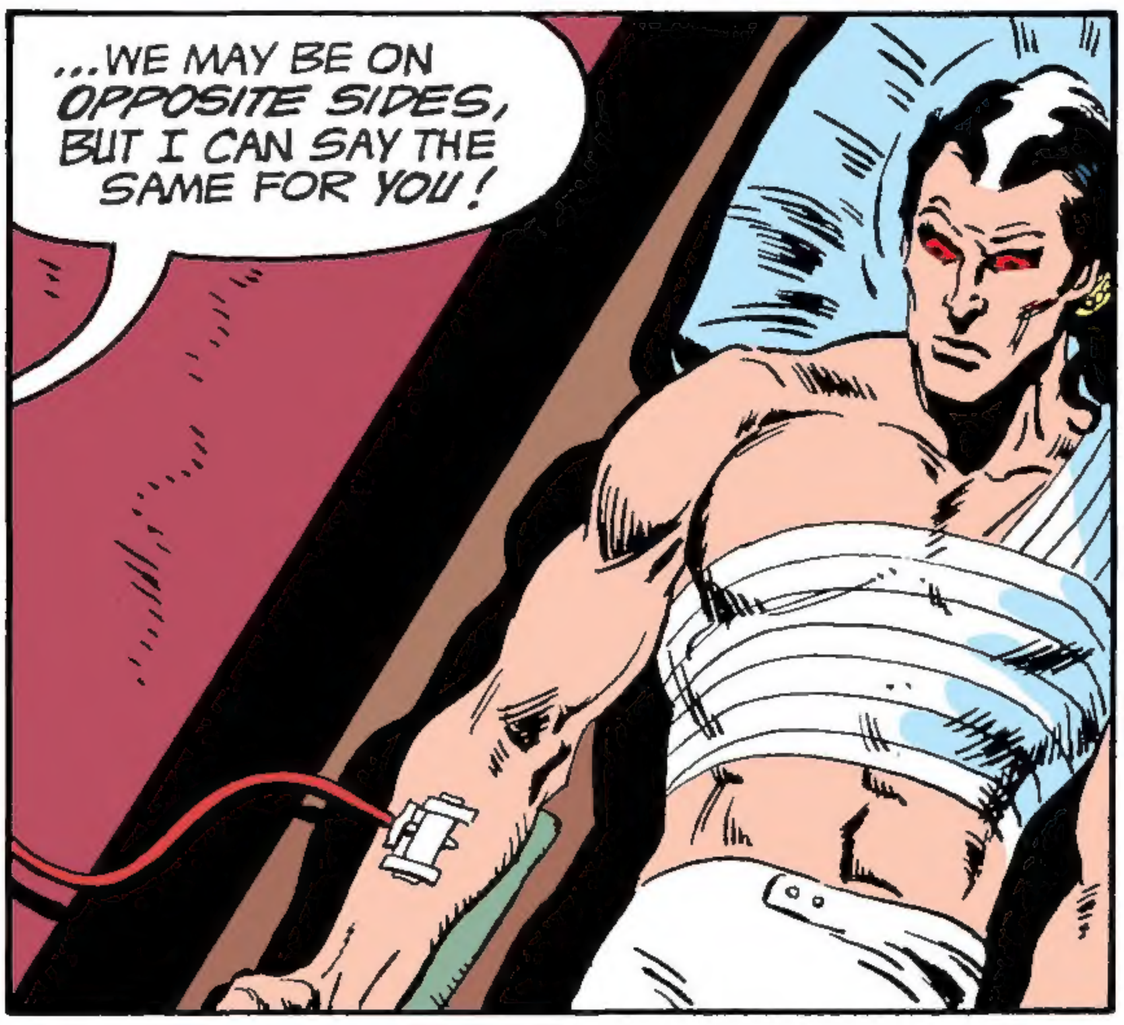
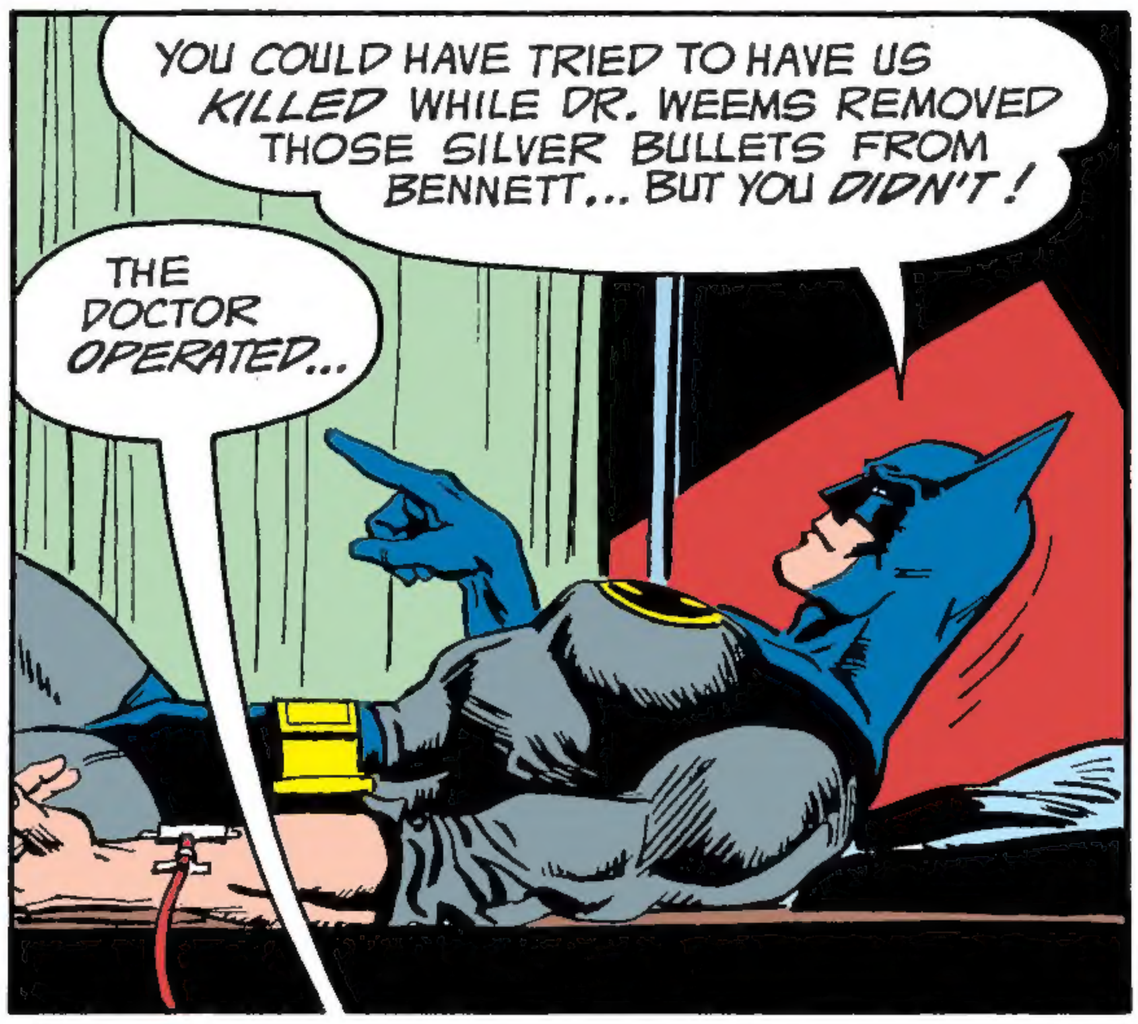
"IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1591, I DIED. IN THE YEAR 1982... I DIED AGAIN -- AND FOREVER."

EPILOGUE: BLOOD OF MY BLOOD...








YOU COULD HAVE TRIED TO HAVE US KILLED WHILE DR. WEEMS REMOVED THOSE SILVER BULLETS FROM BENNETT... BUT YOU DIDN'T!
THE DOCTOR OPERATED...

...AND I PROVIDED THE BLOOD! FORTUNATELY, YOU WEREN'T HIT IN A VITAL SPOT!
IF ONLY I COULD WRITE THIS UP FOR THE AMA JOURNAL...
HOW...HOW IS THE GIRL?
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D-DADDY--?

BABY!

I'M PRETTY TIRED, DADDY... BUT I FEEL *BETTER!*

I ALMOST *LOST* YOU, DARLING ...BUT *NEVER AGAIN!* I'M GOING TO QUIT MY...MY *WORK* AND MAKE ALL THOSE YEARS OF NEGLECT UP TO YOU... I *PROMISE!*

YOU *REST* NOW, OKAY?

THE *BLOOD-RED MOON* HAS BEEN DEFEATED IN *THIS* CITY...BUT THERE ARE *OTHERS!*

I MUST GO!

ME, TOO! I STILL HAVE TO CONVINCE GORDON TO PUT STAKES THROUGH THE HEARTS OF ALL THOSE *VAMPIRE MURDER* VICTIMS!

THE MAYOR'S OFFICE WILL *HATE* IT... BUT IT HAS TO BE *DONE!*

MY *THANKS*, BATMAN, FOR YOUR *HELP!*

THANK *YOU*, BENNETT! IF YOU EVER NEED ANY MORE *HELP*, JUST LET ME *KNOW!*

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"IT HAD GONE WELL. GOTHAM WAS SAFE, LIVES HAD BEEN SPARED, AND I HAD MADE AN ALLY... AND POSSIBLY A FRIEND.

"AND KNOWING THAT, THE MANTLE OF THE NIGHT SEEMED NOT SO HEAVY, AFTER ALL."

END

THE DAWN OF THE LIVING UNDEAD!

"Four hundred years ago my vampiric kiss transformed the woman I loved into a soulless thing called MARY, QUEEN OF BLOOD! Today an unholy order follows her evil designs, and the blood they spill is on my hands! Thus I must stop her...I, Andrew Bennett...I, VAMPIRE"!

And so begins the quest of Andrew Bennett as he hunts his true love across time amid a horror show of blood, murder and grief. Along the way he is confronted with numerous enemies, devastating self-doubt and few allies. But Bennett's powers are unrivaled, and he will not be stopped in his relentless crusade...a path that is guaranteed to end in misery.

I, Vampire! is a daring and unique tale far ahead of its time. This volume collects HOUSE OF MYSTERY #290, 291, 293, 295, 297, 299, 302 and 304-319 and THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #195! Featuring the talents of the character's creators J.M. DeMatteis and Thomas Sutton along with Bruce Jones, Dan Mishkin, Michael William Kaluta and Joe Kubert, I, VAMPIRE! is a must for fans of horror and comics alike!

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